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# S E R M O N S

PREACHED

IN THE

African Protestant Episcopal Church,

OF

ST. THOMAS', PHILADELPHIA.

BY

WM. DOUGLASS, Rector.



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TO THE  
CONGREGATION OF  
ST. THOMAS' PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA ;  
THE FOLLOWING SERMONS,  
PREPARED AND PREACHED FOR THEIR BENEFIT,  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,  
AS A SMALL EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE  
FOR THE MANY TOKENS  
OF ESTEEM AND LOVE  
BESTOWED UPON THE AUTHOR  
DURING HIS PAROCHIAL LABORS  
AMONG THEM  
FOR THE PERIOD OF NINETEEN YEARS.

*Philadelphia, November, 1853.*





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# S E R M O N I

## THE GOD OF HOPE.

“NOW THE GOD OF HOPE FILL YOU WITH ALL JOY AND PEACE IN BELIEVING, THAT YE MAY ABOUND IN HOPE, THROUGH THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST.”

Rom. xv. 13.

IN how many consoling aspects do the inspired writings represent the great Sovereign of the Universe, at whose dread tribunal mankind are destined to appear, to render an account of the deeds done in the body. Conscious as we all are of guilt and condemnation, had we no other point of view to contemplate our Creator, than, as All-wise, Just and Omnipotent, what an accumulation of bitterness would be mixed in that cup of sorrow, of which, all more or less are forced to partake, in their pilgrimage

through mortality. There would then be on the ocean of life, no haven of calm repose to the troubled heart—it would be perpetually tossed between the surging billows of faint hopes and alarming fears. From the general goodness of God as displayed in his Providence, providing all things plentifully both for man and beast—“*giving us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness*”<sup>1</sup>—from this single point of view of God’s Providence, we might solace ourselves with some faint hopes of his kind regards towards his erring and sinful creatures. But how soon would this hope be succeeded by the most gloomy apprehensions in beholding different aspects of the same Providence. In view of the lightnings of heaven desolating the habitations of man, and fearful earthquakes engulfing towns and cities with their inhabitants—“*the pestilence that walketh in darkness,*” and “*the*

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiv., 17.

*destruction that wasteth at noon-day,"*<sup>1</sup>—the variety of diseases and disasters to which man is subject from the cradle to the grave; in view of these awful indications of punitive justice, *hope*, in the clemency of God would give way to agonizing fear. The observing of our moral duties (at best but very defective) could not restore solid peace to our anxious hearts. The consciousness of personal guilt and transgression, with its attendant forebodings of the wrath to come, would forbid it. Upon our destiny in the future world, would hang an impenetrable cloud. If we anticipated any thing at the eventful close of our mortal career, it could be nothing but the righteous vengeance of Heaven, upon our repeated violations of his laws. This would be our wretched state, had we no grounds to regard our Maker in any other aspect than as All-wise, Just and Omnipotent. But the great Father of the Universe has not

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xci., 6.



thus hid from his church and people the smilings of his countenance. He has made a further revelation of his divine character in the inspired volume. The representations he has there made of himself, so far from being repulsive, are the most pleasing and attractive. They are calculated to excite hope and confidence, and thereby win our affections. For while we therein learn that he "*will not at all acquit the wicked,*"<sup>1</sup> we are also informed from the same divine oracles, that he is "*the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, abundant in goodness*"<sup>2</sup>—*the God of all comfort,*<sup>3</sup> *the God of all grace,*<sup>4</sup> *the God of peace.*"<sup>5</sup> These titles, with others of a similar character that might be mentioned, are indicative, of not only what our Creator is in himself, but also what he is to us. In the words of the text,

<sup>1</sup> Nahum. i., 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. xxxiv., 6.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. i., 3.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Peter v., 10.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. xv., 33.

he is presented under the endearing title of *the God of hope*. He is thus represented, because that "*lively hope*" which can sustain the soul amidst the various trials of life comes from God, and finally leads us on to the enjoyment of his beatifick presence.

There is a hope which man derives from the constitution of his nature. It shows itself in early childhood. At mature age, he clings to it as a cheerful companion in his multiplied pursuits in life, and too often, never relaxes his grasp upon the airy phantom, until compelled to do so by the irresistible arm of death. What is it that gives the most buoyancy and light-heartedness to the smiling youth? Is it the survey of the wondrous works of nature, and the great achievements of human skill that present themselves to their senses? Or, will the novelty of these scenes account for their wonted hilarity and glee? No.

It is *hope* in the future of joys to be realized in the acquisition of this, that, or the other prize which earth imparts to a few of her devoted followers. What is it that buoys up the mariner as he leaves his friends, kindred and home, to brave the perils of the deep, but *hope*, that he will safely return with the fruits of his hard toil and labor. What but *hope* that sustains the soldier as he leaves his domestic comforts, to engage in the strife and dangers of the battle field? It is true, that patriotism, a sense of duty to his country, may strengthen his heart and give energy to his arm; but the *hope* that he may escape death and return to his native land to share the honors of successful war, is the secret spring that nerves him up to the terrible encounter. What is it that has inspired so many for the past few years, to suspend their business and leave their homes for the gold regions of Australia and California; but the *hope* of returning richly repaid for all

the hard drudgery to which they submitted. What is it that cheers the sick man upon his bed of languishing but the *hope*, that through medical aid and good attendance, he will again renew his wonted strength and vigor, and be thus prepared to resume his daily avocation. This hope as we before said is natural to us; and seems to be a merciful provision to keep man from sinking under the various difficulties and trials of his probationary state. It is the spring that gives him life and activity in all his movements.

But, as all the faculties, powers and affections of the soul, have so far suffered by the sad fall of our fore-parents, that they incline to things that are "*earthly, sensual and devilish*,"<sup>1</sup> rather than to those things that are pure, spiritual and godlike, *hope* therefore, unrenewed by divine grace, proves to be a deceitful guide. The object of pursuit is far from being attained in every case. In those

<sup>1</sup> James iii., 15.

instances where it is attained, this hope is sure to be disappointed in the enjoyment of the happiness fondly anticipated. The young and sprightly may not realize their airy dreams of future joys and pleasures. The stern realities of life will ever and anon admonish them of the vanity of their pursuits. The soldier, who hopes to return from the battle and receive the plaudit and honors of his countrymen, may leave his carcass among heaps of the slain, to be devoured by the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air. The sick man may be forced to resign hope, and yield to despair of recovery, as death approaches with his cold and icy hand upon his vitals.

The hope referred to in the text, grows not in nature's garden. It is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The endearing object of its regard is God, the inexhaustible fountain of blessedness. It therefore never fails—it never disappoints us—it “*maketh not ashamed; because*

*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*"<sup>1</sup> This holy hope is "*an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.*"<sup>2</sup> Hence it buoys up the Christian under all the trials, troubles and afflictions of life. It will sustain him when "*flesh and heart faileth.*"<sup>3</sup> It will lead him with sweet serenity and peace over Jordan's river, and convey him safely to Canaan's happy land. This heavenly guide will as infallibly lead the regenerate soul into the beatifick presence of the King of saints and angels, as did the miraculous star in the east, which unerringly guided the wise men to the consecrated spot, where their astonished and adoring eyes beheld "*God, manifest in the flesh.*"<sup>4</sup> The hope now referred to can have no place where there is an absence of a true living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. v., 5.<sup>2</sup> Hebrews, vi., 19.<sup>3</sup> Psa. lxxiii., 26.<sup>4</sup> 1 Tim. ii., 16.

sinner. Faith lies at the foundation, and sustains hope. It is the property of faith to lay hold of the precious declarations and promises of God as contained in his written word, and to apply and appropriate them. Hope, desires and expects to realize all what God has thus promised. In the exercise of faith in the promises, *joy and peace* spring up in the soul: and as hope follows upon faith, so faith, as it increases, causes hope to 'abound' more and more. Hence the prayer of the Apostle in behalf of his Christian brethren at Rome:—that, "*the God of hope would fill*" them "*with all joy and peace in believing that*" they "*may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.*"

They, therefore, who live in the enjoyment of this hope are the sincere and humble followers of Christ, who are born again of the Spirit, and exalted to the high dignity of "*the sons of God.*"<sup>1</sup> They

<sup>1</sup> 1 John, iii., 22.

*“in time past walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience,”*<sup>1</sup> *“being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”*<sup>2</sup>

But through the rich mercy and grace of God, the eyes of their understanding were enlightened to perceive and feel their wretched state and condition as sinners before God. They saw themselves utterly cut off from all hope of pardon and reconciliation with their Maker, “by the deeds of the law” they had so often violated. All hope of working out a righteousness of their own, was immediately crushed, upon meditating the startling declaration: *“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.”*<sup>3</sup> But, on beholding that *“new and living way”*

<sup>1</sup> Eph. i., 2.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. ii., 12.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. iii., 10.



opened up for us by the blood of Jesus, they “fled for refuge to lay hold upon” that “blessed hope,” which is “set before us” in the gospel. They found shelter from the wrath of God, the curse of the law, under the protection of the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ. From his inexhaustible fulness, they receive fresh supplies of grace to enable them to “live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world”—“to use the world as not abusing it”—“to pass through things temporal, so as not to lose those things that are eternal.”

My brethren,—the experience of a goodly number of you, I trust, has thus been briefly sketched. Some among you have been timely awakened to see the vanity of all that here dazzle and delude the thoughtless and impenitent. You have been enabled, through grace, to loosen your attachment to them, and to prefer those joys that are pure, spiritual and heavenly

Your happy condition here does not exempt you from pain, sorrow, and trials of various kinds. These you have to meet, as they come in their turn. But in the midst of them all, you may sympathize with the Psalmist when he said, "*I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*"<sup>1</sup> Let me exhort you therefore, to "*hold fast the beginning of your confidence firm unto the end.*" Let your tribulations, trials and afflictions be what they may, "*press*" onward "*toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus,*" increasing and *abounding in hope.* Are you walking in darkness and have no light? Hear what your Almighty friend and father says to his afflicted Church, and *hope on.* "*In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee saith the Lord thy Redeemer. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness*

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxxx., 5.

*shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.*"<sup>1</sup> Are you struggling against the fierce winds of adversity? Listen to the cheering voice of your Redeemer and lift up your hearts.— "*The very hairs of your head,*" says he, "*are all numbered.*"<sup>2</sup> There is no such thing as chance in the history of God's people. Every event of their life, however afflictive in its character, is a link in that golden chain, which is to raise them progressively, from earth to heaven. Are you bowed down with the weight of years and their increasing infirmities? Hope in God and rejoice, that the time is so near at hand, when angels at the gate of Paradise, shall hail you as an immortal *born; born* "*to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.*"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. liv., 8-10.    <sup>2</sup> Luke, xii., 7    <sup>3</sup> 1 Peter, i., 4.

A word of admonition and entreaty to that class of our hearers, whose hopes are all centered in this lower world. It is true my deluded friends, that this earth has its peculiar attractions. The innumerable multitude, that in every land, throng the "*broad way that leadeth to destruction,*" is proof positive, that some strong enchantments are beguiling their devious pathway to the unknown future. But bear in mind, do not forget, in your silly chase after a phantom, that this planet, with all its fine furniture, is to be dissolved. "*The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Nevertheless, we according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.*"<sup>1</sup> Very precious, indeed, to the Christian, is this promise. But it can

<sup>1</sup> 2nd Pet. r, iii., 10-13.

afford no ground of hope to characters which you now sustain. In these *new heavens and new earth* spoken of, you can have no portion. “*There shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*”<sup>1</sup> As your hopes were placed upon the idols of earth, with the idols of a burning earth, you will then be left to perish. The lot of all who shall then sustain the characters that you now do, must be with hypocrites, unbelievers, and all the abominable in the region of hopeless misery and despair. We turn aside from this awful picture to urge you to seek, for, you may yet obtain the Christian’s hope. You are yet within the reach of mercy. The gospel with its inviting voice, still calls.—Conscience, in clamorous tones, still warns.—The Holy Spirit, though as still in his influences as the dew of the morning, yet powerfully strives

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xxi., 27

with you.—The great High Priest who has passed into the heavens, still pleads in your behalf. Your condition, therefore, wretched though it be, is not desperate. However, there is something to be done on your part, before you can attain this inestimable prize. You must be up and doing, co-operating with God. While he *worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure*, you are to “*work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*” This hope is not attained by a few lazy wishes and half-hearted endeavors. It is attained only by an earnest, diligent and persevering use of all the appointed means of grace. There are difficulties to be surmounted: hence, you are called upon in the strength of divine grace, to *renounce the hidden works of darkness*; to “*strive to enter in at the straight gate*;” to “*labor to enter into rest.*” It is treasured up in Christ; therefore, your longing eye must be constantly fixed upon him. In his all-prevailing name alone, you must ap-

proach the throne of heavenly grace, and *ask*, if you would receive, *seek*, if you would find, and *knock, knock, and knock* again, if you would have the door opened unto you. You have the divine assurance, that every one that thus "*asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*"<sup>1</sup> Oh, let me entreat you to begin this struggle in good earnest. It is a noble and magnanimous struggle—a battle against *self*, against "*flesh and blood; against principalities and powers; against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" It is therefore, a formidable struggle. Apparently, the odds are against you. Not so. Greater is He that is for you, than all that can be against you in this greatest of all battles. Angels look on with the most intense interest, to see the issue. And whenever they recognize the cry of a soul newly born of the Spirit, they immediately raise the loud shout in heaven:—"the dead is

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii., 8.

*alive, the lost is found.*” God the Father, who gave his only begotten Son to atone for your sins—God the Son, who redeemed you by his blood—God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth the people of God, are all on your side in this noble warfare. Then desert the camp of Satan. You know that he has often deceived you, and but for the Lord’s mercy would have long since led you onward to the pit of endless woe. Escape then for your life: flee for refuge to lay hold upon that hope which comes from God, and will lead you to those ineffable joys which He has laid up for those who love him.





## S E R M O N   I I

### PEACE IN CHRIST.

“THESE THINGS I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU, THAT IN ME  
YE MIGHT HAVE PEACE.”

John, xvi., 33.

PEACE of mind, is an object so invaluable in itself, that there is no human being but what regards it as worthy of his most anxious toils and ardent pursuit. Men may not be uniform in their ways to obtain it, yet, the desire to enjoy it, is implanted deeply in every bosom. But the great and important question is:—Where is it to be found?

Is it to be found in the empty mirth and sinful pleasures of the world? So thinks the thoughtless and inexperienced youth who is anxious to be free from parental care and restraint, that he may

give loose rein to the indulgence of his carnal and corrupt appetites and passions. He views the sober class of society with a degree of pain and disgust. To their quiet and sedate movements he finds nothing in himself congenial. If he at all admits the wisdom and propriety of their course, he is sure to do it in such a way as to shield himself from conviction. A strict regard to the serious affairs of religion, is proper only, as he will have it, for the aged, the sick and dying. But as it regards the young and sprightly, let them eat, drink and be merry—let them mingle in the circle where countenances brighten, and the heart leaps up at the sound of the timbrel and dance; where their ears are saluted with the loud laugh and the merry song. This, is their proper element, here alone can the soul's native thirst for happiness be gratified. Thus reasons the votary of pleasure. But we would in all kindness beseech him to ponder his steps. Consider, if

indeed, among your many frivolous thoughts there is room left for consideration, consider well the solemn and admonitory words, “ *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof, are the ways of death.*”<sup>1</sup> “ *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes ; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into judgment.*”<sup>2</sup> Be not deceived by external appearances. The sprightly air, the elastic step, the high spirits that mark the men of worldly pleasure, are not to be regarded as infallible signs of inward peace. These outward marks, may be nothing more than a screen to hide from human view, an inward anguish of spirit, unknown to all but that Omniscient Being, from whom no secrets are hid. The pleasure enjoyed in gratifying the inordinate desires of the depraved heart,

<sup>1</sup> PROV. xiv., 12.<sup>2</sup> ECC. xi., 9.

is always followed, more or less, with painful reflections. It is a *false* pleasure. It is not a pleasure that results from the whole machinery of man, moving on in harmonious order, but a pleasure consequent upon doing violence to the highest faculty of our moral nature. There can be no pleasure in sin, unless steps are taken to hush the clamoring voice of conscience, and thus degrade the immortal spirit by bringing it into subjection to the animal nature. When men succeed in this, then, they have a pleasure similar to what is enjoyed in a delightful dream, when the imagination chiefly is at work—a pleasure, equally as false, and which they find to be so, when they are awakened by the rebukes of the Spirit, or the fatal blow of death, who forces them to acknowledge, that alas! it was but a dream. We proceed now to inquire:—

1. Whether or not true peace is to be found in the acquisition of wealth. One

might suppose that it is, judging from the great struggle there is among men in order to acquire it. But a very slight observation of those who have been successful in this respect will convince us of the contrary. There is nothing more remarkable in man, than his proneness to lose sight of whatever he may possess of earthly riches, in his ardent desire to add to his possessions. Whatever may be the opinion of his fellow-men with regard to his state, he himself is far from being satisfied. The point where he supposes that he might possibly consider himself happy, he has not attained. And should he attain it, he then finds that his desires are so much more enlarged, that he feels himself to be as far from happiness as he did before: such is the unsatisfying nature of temporal things. Besides this, there is the painful disquietude arising from the fear of loss. For it is impossible for man so to secure himself in these things as to be

out of all danger of loss. If he hear of a fire, or of a vessel losing her cargo, or of the sudden fall in the price of stock, or of the dishonesty of individuals he has credited; or if he hear of the failure of some monied institution in which he is interested, he is filled with the most painful anxieties of mind, from which his present possessions cannot possibly relieve him.

3. Is true peace to be found in the honors of the world—in fame? What is fame? We may have seen its nature illustrated in the history of the great political men of the present day. For a little while we see them puffed by the wind of a multitude; but how soon do we behold them by the same multitude as severely pelted. The conduct of the people toward our blessed Lord, forcibly illustrates the emptiness of fame, and clearly shows how little to be depended on is the applause of men. Those who at one time cried:—“Hosanna, blessed

is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," at another, unite in the tumultuous cry:—" *Away with him, away with him, crucify him.*" There are few only, who by hard toiling and study, which "is a weariness of the flesh," ascend the hill of fame; and those few, if they attained all the happiness anticipated by them, (which is far from being the case,) we find that they generally meet with a reverse which gives force to the exhortation of Scripture: "*Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils.*"<sup>1</sup> But suppose, what is very rare, that the breeze of popular favor should be uninterrupted in its course—that fame's trumpet should sound forth their praise without one discordant note. Pleasing as this might be to the distinguished personage, it is certain, that this circumstance can afford no comfort to the soul while the body lay prostrate upon a bed

<sup>1</sup> Isa. ii., 22.



of languishing—no stay and staff to the trembling spirit when the solemn hour of departing life arrives. A pompous funeral would, doubtless, follow the deceased to the house appointed for all living. Sculptured marble would tell to future ages the spot where rests the honored remains. A similar tribute of respect we may fairly conjecture, was paid to the memory of that noted worldling we read of in holy writ. But it could not reach his case, or meet his necessity in the spirit land. While his surviving friends were eulogizing his name in this world, the thrilling message that came back from Dives was: "*I am tormented in this flame.*" Thus have we briefly inquired of the pleasures, the profits, the honors of the world, and in each department, a voice is heard saying true peace is not to be found in me. Where then is true and substantial happiness to be found? Surely our heavenly Father has not produced in our bosoms

this undying thirst after happiness to be a perpetual source of torment to us. Such a reflection cannot be indulged in for a moment without incurring the guilt of the most horrid blasphemy. "*The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.*"<sup>1</sup> The desire for happiness has been incorporated in our moral nature, for the benevolent purpose of inciting us to seek it where alone it can be found. Again we inquire, where can it be obtained? Let us hear what the wise man of the east said on this subject. He was surrounded by all the magnificence and grandeur of a royal court. He was eminent for profound wisdom, and he diligently applied himself to the seeking of this invaluable treasure. He tried every thing under the sun that man calls good and great. And what was the result of his long and patient research? The conclusion of the

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxlv., 9.

whole matter to which he arrived was, to—“*Fear God and keep his commandments.*”<sup>1</sup> But a greater than Solomon is here—the Lord from heaven—He whom the prophet Isaiah points out as the “*Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.*”<sup>2</sup> Let us then give the more earnest heed to what he says on this all-important subject: for he must be perfectly acquainted with the things that belong to our peace. He is now in communication with that favorite few from whom he is soon to take his departure. And it is reasonable to suppose that he will plainly point out to them the path of peace. This he does: but his instructions on this subject are very different from the notions they entertained of happiness. Like many of the present day, their views were too much tinctured with the spirit of the world. To have the kingdom restored unto

<sup>1</sup> Ecc. xii., 13.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. ix., 6.

Israel appears then to have been the height of their ambition. And they had entertained the hope that the great object of his advent into this world was to effect this desired end. But to their great surprise, he expatiates upon his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, and the glorious results that would flow therefrom. In the precious words that fell from his lips his God-like benevolence shone forth conspicuously. He knew very well the severe trials and difficulties to which his disciples would be exposed after his departure from them. He knew that neither the temporal prosperity and glory of Israel, or any thing else in this world was calculated to afford solid peace to the soul. But he would not leave them comfortless. - Hence in infinite love and compassion he assures them that peace could be found no where else but *in him*. "*These things I have spoken unto you that in me ye might have peace.*"

“*To be in Christ,*” is a Scriptural expression that deserves special notice. You are aware that the inspired volume in representing the wretched condition of fallen and degenerate man, sets before him as the only firm ground of hope, the vicarious atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It directs us with penitent hearts and a lively faith to ground our expectation of pardoning mercy at the hand of God, solely on the all-prevailing merits of the Saviour. Now, as those only who thus rely, derive from him all the special benefits, blessings and privileges procured by his death, they are therefore represented as being *in him*, or united to him by the appropriating property of that “faith which works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world.” This spiritual union is compared by our Lord to the vital connexion that exists between the branch and the vine. “*I am the vine,*” says he, “*ye are the branches: he that*

*abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*"<sup>1</sup> As the branch derives all its nourishment from its union to the parent stock, so does the Christian in like manner derive spiritual life, vigor and fruitfulness through his union to Christ by true faith. The characters therefore who are properly designated as being *in* Christ, are his true sincere followers; and the happy result that follows from this connexion is—they *have peace*. Let us consider the nature of this peace which can be found nowhere else but in Christ.

It is a spiritual peace, heavenly and divine in its nature and origin. It is a peace that relates to our Maker, our own consciences and to all mankind. No one is at peace with God in his natural and impenitent state. In the bosom of every man until renewed by divine grace, there is a principle directly at war with the Most High. It is irreconcilable in its

<sup>1</sup> St. Jno. xv., 5.

hostility to the divine government. “*The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his laws, neither indeed can be.*” In consequence of this hostile position maintained by the impenitent they are objects of Heaven’s righteous displeasure; and will inevitably perish by the hand of divine justice, unless they avert it by a timely reconciliation to his plan of salvation, devised in mercy for the full recovery of man from the sad ruins of the fall. Hence “*there is no peace to the wicked, they are like the troubled sea, that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.*” They cannot enjoy peace and friendship with God. They sit in darkness and in the region and shadow of death. “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” Light and darkness cannot amalgamate. ‘Two cannot walk together except they agree.’ The ungodly may often contrive to hush the voice of conscience and sing a false peace to themselves; but there will be special seasons in their his-

tory when they are made to sweat and agonize under its tortures, and the fearful forebodings of the wrath to come. Now as such persons are enemies to God, enemies to themselves, they must also be enemies to the true peace and happiness of their fellow men. For he who is blind to his own best interest, cannot be prepared to consult the true interest of others. They are all marshalled on the side of their great Leader; "*the Prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.*"<sup>1</sup> Their influence is in opposition to that kingdom which Christ came to establish — that "*kingdom*" that consists "*in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*" And this is true of all the various grades of character that obtain among the impenitent. "*He that is not with me,*" says our Lord, "*is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.*"<sup>2</sup> Thus

<sup>1</sup> Eph. ii., 2.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xii., 30.



it is with the carnal mind which is enmity against God, destitute of true inward peace, and in opposition to the true happiness of their fellow-men. On the other hand, those who maintain a vital union with Christ, are new creatures—‘they are begotten again’—they are “*born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*”<sup>1</sup> Whereas in their unregenerate state, the principle of hostility against the divine government reigned in their bosoms, now, the heavenly principle of love to God is graciously shed abroad in their hearts. And while they evince their love to Him by a sincere and cheerful obedience to his laws, He manifests his love and friendship to them by sending forth his Spirit to seal their pardon, remove their guilt, and witness to their adoption into the heavenly family: so that instead of being as before, tormented with a painful appre-

<sup>1</sup> Jn. i., 13.

hension of his displeasure, they now have the sweet comfort of regarding him as their reconciled Friend and Father. They have no ground to look for perfect and uninterrupted happiness in this state of probation and trial. While they remain in this world, they expect their share of tribulation—they count it not strange, when they are in heaviness through manifold temptations. Of all this they have been forewarned by their Lord and Master, to whose sufferings they must in their measure be conformed, if they would hope to participate with him in the ineffable glories of his kingdom above. But it is their exalted privilege at all times, to “look to the hill, from whence cometh their help”—to approach the throne of grace with humble boldness, and obtain mercy and find grace to help in their peculiar time of need—“*in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,*” to ‘let’ their “*requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God which passeth*

*all understanding, shall keep" their " hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*<sup>1</sup> The peace that flows from this source is called the peace of God, because he is the author and supporter of it. It is said to pass all understanding, because its nature and excellency can be fully set forth by no human tongue. We do not say that the ungodly have no pleasure. It is the pleasure which they enjoy in the gratification of their carnal desires, appetites and passions, that so allures, captivates and holds them in durance vile, that they have no desire to be elevated above earth; no desire to have their eyes opened to behold that radiant host of angels, patriarchs, prophets and apostles who all point to the Lamb of God as the only way to glory, immortality, and eternal life. So enfeebled are they in their moral nature, that they cannot command the energy to imitate the noble example of Moses, who

<sup>1</sup> Phil. iv., 6.

would “*rather suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.*”<sup>1</sup> Ah! how true it is, that the pleasures of sin are but *for a season*:—they are *momentary*. And besides, they leave an ‘aching void’ within. They leave nothing to which the mind can recur with pure and pleasing delight. Not so with the peace of God. The sweet tranquillity the believer enjoys from a sense of pardon and acceptance with his Maker, is rendered doubly precious from the fact, that it is a pledge, a foretaste of that eternal “rest that remains for the people of God.” Hence it is said to be ‘a *peace* that flows as a river.’ As a river flows onward and becomes wider and deeper as it approaches the ocean into which it is ultimately lost; so does the peace which Jesus gives, flow on pleasantly in the soul, increasing in its depth, expanding in its onward course, until it

<sup>1</sup> Heb. xi., 25.

is finally lost in the boundless ocean of never-ending peace. Here then is that precious jewel which can satisfy the soul of man, because it is every way suited to his immortal nature, and fully adequate to meet his wants both in this world and that which is to come.

How unspeakably happy is the lot of sincere Christians. The blessed Redeemer, though seated at the right hand of the majesty on high, yet manifests himself unto them as he does not unto the world. He still addresses you by his word and Spirit in the same tones of love, tenderness and compassion, that charmed the hearts of that little band that followed him in the days of his humiliation. When you are in heaviness through manifold temptations—when exposed to the pitiless peltings of storm after storm—when the heart is sad and cheerless under the bereavement of some near and dear friend; or when the foul breath of slander has prevailed against you, causing

friends to forsake and enemies to exclaim: *‘there, there, so we would have it!’* in these dark hours, you may hear the words of Jesus like the soft music of heaven falling sweetly upon your ears, saying, *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”*<sup>1</sup> Those among you, my brethren, whose experience can bear witness to the peaceful paths of religion, should be careful to evince your inward tranquillity by an exhibition of Christian tempers, dispositions, words and actions; by works of love and charity to your neighbors; by endeavoring to the utmost of your ability to promote the cause of your Redeemer in the world. Thus will you be letting your light shine, and be preparing yourselves more and more for that glorious future not far in the distance, when the

<sup>1</sup> Jno. xiv., 27

cross shall be exchanged for the crown ;  
“*light afflictions for an eternal weight of glory.*”

There is another very interesting class of whom the blessed Jesus is far from being unmindful. We allude to those who are writing bitter things against themselves, who feel the burden of their sins to be intolerable, who are seeking true peace by a diligent use of the appointed means of grace. Such should be encouraged to persevere in hope of obtaining the pearl they so anxiously desire. Let them listen to Heaven’s inviting voice, addressing their peculiar state, and dry up their tears. “*Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”<sup>1</sup> “*If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.*”<sup>2</sup> While you are laying aside every weight and the sin that so easily besets you, continually look unto Jesus.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi., 28.

<sup>2</sup> Jno. vii., 37

Never lose sight of the cross, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, for he alone is our peace. Shelter yourselves under the protection of his atoning blood, and you shall have peace: your darkness shall be turned into light, your mourning into songs of joy.

But in what terms shall we address that numerous class of our fellow-creatures, who are hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water; who are enemies to God, and consequently, utter strangers to true peace. We might with great propriety utter forth the terrible threatenings of God's word against all who persevere in their rebellion against his government. We might refer you to the many terrible exhibitions of his wrath upon the impenitent in former ages, illustrative of the truth, "*that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished.*"<sup>1</sup> But we would

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xi., 22.



rather beseech you to be reconciled to God while as yet mercy may be sought, and pardon and peace obtained. *“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me,”* saith the Lord, *“and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear and your soul shall live.”*<sup>1</sup>                   <sup>a</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Isa. lv., 2.

## S E R M O N I I I .

### SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY OF GAIUS.

“THE ELDER, UNTO THE WELL-BELOVED GAIUS WHOM I LOVE IN THE TRUTH. BELOVED, I WISH ABOVE ALL THINGS THAT THOU MAYEST PROSPER AND BE IN HEALTH, EVEN AS THY SOUL PROSPERETH. FOR I REJOICED GREATLY WHEN THE BRETHREN CAME AND TESTIFIED OF THE TRUTH THAT IS IN THEE, EVEN AS THOU WALKEST IN THE TRUTH.”

3 Epis. John 1, 2, 3 vs.

THIS epistle is addressed to some converted Gentile called Gaius. But as there are three persons of this name mentioned in the New Testament, there is an uncertainty with regard to the one particularly referred to. There is one Gaius of Corinth, whom St. Paul calls his “*host, and*” *the host of “the whole Church.”*<sup>1</sup> There is another named

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xvi. 23.

‘*Gaius*,’ a native “*of Macedonia*,”<sup>1</sup> who accompanied St. Paul, and spent some time with him at Ephesus. There is “*Gaius of Derbe*,”<sup>2</sup> who also was a fellow-traveller of the Apostle Paul. It is supposed, however, that the person *here* particularly addressed, was the Gaius of Corinth, as hospitality was a prominent feature in his character. The design of the Apostle in writing this epistle to Gaius, was to commend his steadfastness in the faith, and the general hospitality he had shown, especially, to the ministers of Christ. In carrying forward this design, he, in the mean time, rebukes one Diotrophes, who, had arrogantly assumed the chief direction in the affairs of the Church. He had not only refused a kind reception to those messengers of peace and salvation himself, but had hindered them from doing so who were thus disposed. The

<sup>1</sup> Acts, xix. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Acts, xx. 4.

Apostle also commends an excellent person named Demetrius, whom he proposed as a pattern which the whole church might safely imitate. From the high commendation here so cordially given to Gaius, he must have been universally regarded as a man of eminent piety, one, who was deeply concerned for the welfare and prosperity of the Church; one who endeavored to the utmost of his ability to advance the cause of his Redeemer in the world. It was this that so greatly endeared him to the venerable Apostle. Hence he addresses him with all the tenderness of paternal affection — “*The elder, unto the well-beloved Gaius whom I love in the truth, or truly love.*”

He manifests his sincere love and regard for him by earnestly praying for his prosperity, both in a temporal and spiritual point of view. “*I wish above all things,*” or with respect to all things, “*that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth.*”

Prayer in its very nature, is an acknowledgement of our absolute dependance upon God for the blessings we petition at his hands. St. John, fully realizing the truth, that "*every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights,*" prays that "Gaius might prosper and be in health." Thus, by his example, he inculcates upon us the duty of cultivating the spirit of dependance upon God for success in all our endeavors, to improve either our temporal or spiritual interests. The worldly-minded habitually indulge an opposite spirit. They are wise in their own wisdom, and strong in their own strength. Hence they attribute the success and prosperity of their affairs to their own prudence and foresight. The folly and danger of this lofty spirit were awfully exemplified in that eventful crisis in the history of Nebuchadnezzar. While he walked abroad in his palace, revolving with a

secret complacency his grandeur and magnificence, saying to himself, “*Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?*”<sup>1</sup>

While he thus, in the haughtiness of pride arrogated all the glory to himself; a voice from heaven declared to him that his kingdom was departed from him, that he should be driven from men, and his dwelling be with the beasts of the field, until he knew that the Most High ruled in the kingdoms of men and gave them to whomsoever he would. This proud spirit which refuses to acknowledge its dependance upon the Creator, the holy scriptures every where assure us is an object that God abominates: while on the other hand, the spirit manifested by the apostle, he highly approbates. “*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*”<sup>2</sup>

Gaius, in behalf of whom the apostle

<sup>1</sup> Dan. iv. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Jam. iv., 6.

prays, seems to have been very prosperous with regard to his spiritual state. This appears,

1st. From the genuineness of his faith. It is affirmed that "*the truth was in him, and that he walked in, or according to the truth.*" Evangelical faith may be defined to be, a hearty belief of the truth as it is in Jesus. It is not a cold speculative principle, floating in the head without influencing the heart and life. It is a living, active principle, regulating the heart and outward conduct. It takes the Lord at his word. It influences the possessor to provide against the evil he threatens, and to pursue with earnestness and decision the good he promises. For instance, when God told Noah that the end of all flesh had come before him, and that he was about to deluge the earth with a flood; Noah's faith in the testimony of God influenced him to provide against the threatened evil by preparing an ark for the saving of his house. When

Lot was, commanded to leave Sodom, being informed by unquestionable authority that the Lord would destroy the city with its inhabitants; his faith led him to flee to the mountain, the divinely appointed place of refuge. It was this living, active faith, that marked the character of the Christian so highly commended in the passage under consideration.

It is important to believe all the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, such as the Divinity of Christ, his vicarious sacrifice, the necessity of repentance, faith and obedience; the doctrines of future rewards and punishment. But it is not enough speculatively to believe these truths; it is indispensable that we have a realizing sense of the great importance of them in their personal application; otherwise, we shall stand justly charged with having only the form of godliness while we are destitute of the power thereof. It was not thus with the eminent Christian here proposed as a pattern worthy of imitation.



He was deeply sensible of the great necessity of personal holiness. Hence his faith led him to “renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world,” and to present himself at the throne of heavenly grace, where he diligently sought and in due time found “that peace which the world cannot give.” And having “the Holy Ghost given unto” him, all those graces that adorn and beautify the Christian character, viz., virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, brotherly-kindness, charity, all these were manifest in his life and conduct. For it is further said of him, that,

2. “*He walked in the truth.*” His course through life was in accordance with the requisitions of the gospel. He adorned the gospel of God his Saviour by a holy walk and chaste conversation—living soberly, righteously, and godly amidst a crooked and perverse generation. Though he could not have regarded himself as having attained perfection,

yet, like the apostle Paul, who, “forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before, he *pressed* toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”

The bright and shining example set before the world by this Christian, afforded grounds of rejoicing to the apostle John. “*I rejoiced greatly,*” says he, “*when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth.*” While it is always a source of pleasure to a gospel minister to witness the general health and temporal prosperity of his fellow-Christians, yet does it afford him more exquisite joy, when they give a good testimony to the truth, by their walking as it becomes the gospel. As there can scarcely be a greater obstacle in the way of sinners duly considering the claims of Christianity, than the loose and irregular lives of those who professedly say: “Lord, Lord,

and do not the things” that he says; so, on the other hand, there is nothing better calculated, perhaps, to stop the mouths of gainsayers, to fasten conviction upon the mind of the ungodly, than the consistent conduct of religious professors. They are then as a city set on a hill that cannot be hid—they evince to all around that religion is a divine reality, and not a cunningly devised fable.

In the character of Gaius, we see one who used the world as not abusing it. He was blessed with all the necessary comforts and conveniences of life, and very probably upon the whole, was in a very prosperous condition as it regards temporal matters; as we may learn from his repeated acts of kindness “*to brethren and strangers.*” There were many to “bear witness before the church,” of this praiseworthy trait in his character. His prosperity in the things of this life did not, however, prove to him a curse. He did not suffer the things of this world to

cheat him out of his soul. He passed through things temporal, so as not to lose those things that are eternal. He labored "not only for the meat that perisheth, but for that also which endureth to everlasting life." His *soul* prospered. The seed of divine truth sown in his heart, sprung up and brought forth the fruit of good living to the honor and glory of God. He prospered not only with regard to his present gracious state, but also with regard to his future prospects. He was laying up "treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." Truly prosperous, indeed! A prosperity which nothing on earth can destroy. We may pass along here for awhile in the enjoyment of excellent health of body, but the blighting hand of sickness sooner or later will prostrate the most vigorous constitution. We come up like a flower, fair and beautiful, opening and expanding the faculties by

degrees; but we are soon cut down by the scythe of some ruthless distemper, or nipt and withered by the frost of some wasting weakness and decay. We may prosper here in the riches of the world, but if they do not take to themselves wings and flee away from us, how soon are we hurried away from them into the eternal world by the irresistible arm of death? But what can destroy the prosperity of the soul? Can sickness? No. Can death? St. Paul triumphantly answers—No. “*For I am persuaded,*” says he, “*that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” Blessed, yea, thrice blessed is the man whose *soul prospers.*

But how few comparatively are in this happy condition. You will all agree with

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii., 38–39.

me in saying that their souls do not prosper, who are in a state of nature, unrenewed, unsanctified by the influences of the Holy Spirit. For you are aware that it is written upon the inspired pages that, "*the wrath of God abideth upon them.*" They are represented therein, as wanderers upon dark and barren mountains without a shelter and perishing with hunger. Though by some strange infatuation, they may imagine themselves "*rich, increased in goods and have need of nothing,*" they are nevertheless "*wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked.*"

Nor can it be said of backsliders that their souls prosper. They may be likened to a "tree whose fruit withereth." "*The latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them*

*according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”*<sup>1</sup> Nor can it be said of the luke-warm Christian, that his soul prospers. He is self-condemned. The language of his agonizing heart is:—

“Where is the blessedness I knew  
 When first I saw the Lord?  
 Where is the soul-refreshing view  
 Of Jesus and his word?  
 What peaceful hours I then enjoy’d,  
 How sweet their mem’ry still!  
 But now I feel an aching void  
 The world can never fill.”

The luke-warm professor is thus addressed by the great Head of the church: *“I would thou wert cold or hot, because thou art luke-warm, and neither cold or hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”*<sup>2</sup>

The man of whose soul prosperity can be truly affirmed, has been created anew

<sup>1</sup> 2d Pet. ii., 21-22.      <sup>2</sup> Rev. iii., 15-16.

in Christ Jesus. He advances in the divine life, and abounds in every good word and work. He is deeply concerned not only for his own personal salvation, but also for the present and eternal well-being of his fellow-travellers to eternity. Hence he is found striving to the utmost of his ability to advance the cause of Christ among his fellowmen. He is eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a messenger of peace and consolation to the distressed, whether of mind, body or estate.

We should above all things, my beloved brethren, see to it that our souls prosper. It is very proper that we should pray both for health of body and prosperity in our daily avocations. It becomes us also to be diligent in the use of all lawful means in order to obtain them. God, however, in his wise and inscrutable providence, may not see fit to crown our efforts in this respect with desired success. But in regard to the spiritual prosperity of the soul, he never fails to



crown persevering diligence with success, Whoever humbly yields to the life-giving and fructifying influences of that Holy Spirit which is to abide with the church forever, is sure to thrive and prosper, "like a tree planted by the water side." Upon the soul the Creator has stamped his seal of immortality—it is destined to run parallel with his own uncreated existence. When our globe shall be dissolved, and all that are therein shall be burned up, the *soul*, more refined and dignified, shall survive the dissolution of matter, and shall either flourish in immortal youth and beauty on the healthful plains of Paradise, or endure an indescribable burden of anguish in the doleful regions of endless woe. How invaluable then is the soul, and how solemnly pressing are its claims upon our most serious regard. Consider what the great Eternal has done to promote its everlasting health and vigor. He himself came down from heaven, veiled his unutterable glories in

humanity, proclaimed his own everlasting gospel, led a suffering life, died an ignominious death, rose again from the grave, “*ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers*”—“*For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*”<sup>1</sup> “*the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.*”<sup>2</sup> Now, who among us in this view, does not perceive something of the incalculable value of the soul? For infinite wisdom does nothing unnecessary. And seeing that he has been at a vast expense of means in behalf of our souls, it shows the awfulness of the peril to which they are exposed. It accounts for that solemn and thrilling question propounded by himself:—“*What shall a man give in*

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv., 12.<sup>2</sup> Col. ii., 19.

*exchange for his soul?"* Nothing can be compared to it in value. Lose that, and you lose *your all*. I beseech you therefore to attend earnestly to its high concerns. Beware of unbelief, pride, prejudice, envy and malice. These are the briars that render the soul barren, and prevent the word of divine truth from being so ingrafted into the heart as to bring forth fruit to the honor and glory of God. Seek diligently the influences of that Spirit who alone can cause the native desert of the heart to bud and blossom as the rose; and having the heavenly graces implanted therein by his own right hand, and abounding in the same when this painful life shall end, you may look forward in hope of being conveyed to that bright world where the soul no longer clogged in her devotional exercises by frail humanity, shall expand and grow more and more like God through everlasting ages.

## S E R M O N I V .

### MUTUAL FORBEARANCE AND FORGIVENESS.

“FORBEARING ONE ANOTHER, AND FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER, IF ANY MAN HAVE A QUARREL AGAINST ANY; EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO DO YE.”—Col. iii., 13.

IN this world, where sin has dominion over the hearts of the great mass of mankind, and influences in some measure the regenerate, there will always be numerous occasions that will call for the exercise of mutual forbearance, and the spirit of forgiveness. Occasions will arise not only among the ungodly, but also among those who, in the general tenor of their lives, are governed by Christian principles. To resent injuries, either real or supposed, is natural to man. The obvious design of this characteristic of our

nature, is to guard us from real injuries. When we suffer it to proceed no further than to shield ourselves from real harm, it is not, as we conceive, criminal. For instance:—A person endeavors to instil into the mind of another, principles known by him to be dangerous in themselves, and destructive in their consequences. Now, should a holy indignation arise in his mind against such principles, from the view of their injurious character, this resentment, so far from being criminal, would be just, properly directed, and in strict compliance with the exhortation of St. James, “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*”<sup>1</sup> When resentment is suffered to go so far as to injure others merely for the sake of gratifying this feeling, or as a retaliation for some wrong done, or supposed to be done to us, then it is highly criminal. In opposition to this spirit, we are exhorted in

<sup>1</sup> James iv., 7.

the text to cultivate the temper and spirit of mutual forbearance and forgiveness. “*Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*”

This exhortation, you perceive, is addressed to professing Christians. It supposes that the spirit of resentment may be carried to a criminal extent even among them, thus giving occasion among themselves for the exercise of the conciliatory temper recommended in the text.

To injure a person, is unlawfully to take or withhold from him that to which he has a just claim. To deprive one of life, liberty, or his personal or real estate, which he has not forfeited by crime, is the grossest violation of this principle. No one, we presume, can consistently bear the Christian’s name, who is guilty in either of these respects. But there are other respects in which we may injure

our neighbor, without depriving him of either his life, liberty or property. We may injure him *by rash and precipitate judging, by indulging uncharitable thoughts, and by evil speaking.*

### 1. Rash and precipitate judging.

Perhaps nothing is more common than for men to form an unfavorable opinion of their neighbor upon the slightest acquaintance; yet, this is equally injurious as it is unjust. To pronounce unfavorably upon the general character of a person from some single fault we may discover, or think we discover, is certainly injuring him, inasmuch as it is withholding from him that esteem, which his other good qualities justly demand, even suppose him to be faulty in other respects. For who is there without fault? Perhaps there are few men so bad, but that may possess some good traits of character. Lest we should be misunderstood here, it may be necessary to

observe, that, in speaking of the good traits in the character of a bad man, all that we mean is, that they are good in their effects; not that they are positively good in their nature and regarded so in the sight of God. No action of an accountable being can be intrinsically good, good in the sight of our Maker, that does not proceed from a proper motive, a due sense of our obligations to Him. The high and holy principle that should govern us in our actions is thus stated by the great apostle to the Gentiles:—“*Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*”<sup>1</sup> The same apostle, showing how indispensable it is that we should have a constant regard to this holy principle, also says:—“*Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.*”<sup>2</sup> The 13th Article

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. x., 31.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii., 3.



of our church is in perfect accordance with this statement of St. Paul. "Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say,) deserve grace of congruity: yea, rather, for that they are not done as God has willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." So, in this view, nothing done by an impenitent man can be really good. In another point of view he may, however, do something that may be called good, from the good effects resulting therefrom. A liberal contribution, for instance, may be cheerfully given to some educational institution, or for religious purposes. This may be the means of promoting the present and eternal happiness of thousands of our race. An unregenerate person may do this, and other kindred acts, and in view of their

beneficial effects, they may in a qualified sense, be denominated good. The point however to which we would arrive, is this:—If unregenerate men may have some commendable traits in their character, how much more ground is there to regard those in a favorable light, who are in some good degree, renewed by the Spirit? So, for Christians to pronounce unfavorably upon the general character of their brethren, simply on the ground of some fault they may discover, or think they discover, is to injure them seriously. It is to withhold from them that affectionate regard which their other good qualities justly demand. Persons who are given to this uncharitable turn, require but little evidence; indeed, what they require, is undeserving the name of evidence; all they require, in order to bring their minds to a decision upon the general character of their neighbor, is only to see, or think they see, in him some slight deviation from their precon-

ceived notions of propriety. Should his peculiar manner, or mode of address not happen to be in strict accordance with their ideas of refinement, immediately, an unfavorable inference is drawn with regard to his taste. Should an opinion be expressed on a certain subject, though that opinion should not be the result of much deliberation, but expressed at the impulse of the moment, no allowance whatever is made for this; a broad inference is at once made, utterly prejudicial to the whole character. Again, should a professor of religion, in an unguarded hour, manifest undue warmth of feeling, why, he is denounced at once as a hypocrite, utterly destitute of every spark of vital piety. Such imperfections as these, give a sufficient warrant to the uncharitable, to cast a shade over the whole character. How common is this spirit of rash and precipitate judging of others exhibited, not only among the ungodly, but among the professed fol-

lowers of Christ. But what is more unequitable and unjust? How far is this from complying with that golden rule:—  
“*Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*”<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, this rash and precipitate judging, leads,

2. To the indulging of unkind, cold and bitter feelings. Our feelings in every instance, are regulated by our belief. To this general statement, I reckon there can be found no exception. In all cases, our feelings correspond with our belief. Hence a child, believing the testimony of others, concerning the venomous nature of a viper, indulges a secret antipathy towards it, though he may never have seen anything more of the reptile than its picture. It is needless to enumerate instances to illustrate so plain a principle of our nature. It must be admitted by all who will reflect for a moment, that as we

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii., 12.

believe, so do we feel and act. Here we are disposed to digress a little, in order to make a useful reflection. We would observe, that Christianity is in strict accordance with the laws of our nature. Are we so constituted, that we feel and act as we believe? See then how Christianity is adapted to this law of our moral nature, attaching as it does, so much importance to faith in God. *“Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”*<sup>1</sup> *“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*<sup>2</sup> As faith, or belief, produces corresponding feelings or actions in temporal matters, so has it the same effect in spiritual things. And how clearly does the wisdom and goodness of God shine forth in this view of the Christian system. His *wisdom*, in appointing faith as an instru-

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, xi., 6.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. v., 1.

ment in our salvation, it being from its active nature, every way calculated to produce the desired effect, viz., *obedience*. His *goodness* is seen in adapting his saving plan to the constitution of our nature, thus rendering our salvation attainable in perfect harmony with the law of our moral being. But to return to the inference that we were about to make. As we feel and act as we believe, so, when a rash and precipitate judgment is formed, with regard to the general character of our brother, we, as a natural consequence, feel and act towards him accordingly; unless we be deceitful — uttering smooth words with the lips, while there is war in the heart. Do we believe him to be a time-serving, popularity seeking creature, unstable, driven and tossed about by every wind, no matter from what point it blows? Now, if we have come to this conclusion concerning his character, and have any just views of what is praiseworthy in man, it

is impossible to esteem, or to place any confidence in such an one. If we have, from some cause, been led to regard a professor of religion as a hypocrite, and have just views of what is becoming the Christian, so far from cherishing in our bosom, sentiments of esteem for his character, we will behold him in all his religious performances with pain and disgust. We mention these instances, as specimens of unkind feelings following in the train of unfavorable opinions formed of our fellow-men. Having arrived at an unfavorable decision with regard to the character of our brother, and unkind and bitter feelings being now generated in the heart, the next step is to proceed.

3. *To evil speaking.*—This naturally follows. When unkind feelings are indulged towards any of our brethren, it will soon be made manifest by unkind words. “*Out of the abundance of the heart,*” says

our Lord, "*the mouth speaketh.*"<sup>1</sup> The faults uncharitably conceived of our neighbor, are now ungenerously exposed; exposed, too, while he has no opportunity of explaining, or of defending himself, for it is now done in his absence. These faults are exposed, not to secure themselves from injury, but to injure their neighbor, to lower the esteem that others may have towards him, and thus gratify that malignant spirit which is far below the Christian character. The tongue now is set in operation, and when that is the case, soon a great fire is kindled from a little matter. The tale-bearer now has his legitimate work to do. He listens attentively, occasionally smiles, with his ears wide open as he smiles, and when he gets as much as he can conveniently carry, he shoulders his burden, away he goes and lodges it at his neighbor's door. By adding a little, and saying with a significant nod,—I would not take it if I

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii., 34.



were you, he succeeds in kindling a blaze. Families, neighbors, and intimate companions, are now at variance, indulging the spirit of revenge, hatred and malice, for, they can scarcely tell what. And were the true cause ascertained, it would in most instances be found to have originated from a wrong judgment rashly formed; from some word inadvertently spoken, or some action in the performance of which, there was no evil design whatever. Now, it is in these ways that we may injure, and be injured by others; and our duty as Christians, is, on all occasions to be ready to exercise the spirit of mutual forbearance and forgiveness. “*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*”

We proceed to a few considerations that should induce us to cultivate this spirit.

1. We should recollect how apt we are to be mistaken in our judgment of the general character of a person even after a patient observation, much more so upon a slight and single circumstance. Joseph was reared under the same roof with his brothers; they, therefore, had a fair opportunity to investigate his character; yet, see how grossly mistaken they were respecting it. Because he related to them his remarkable dream, that "*the sun, moon, and stars, made obeisance to him,*" they regarded him as an ambitious youth, who desired to exalt himself over them. To arrive at a correct decision at all times with regard to the character of our neighbor, requires more knowledge than God has granted to man. Are we fully acquainted with the constitutional make of any individual? Do we know his peculiar turn of thinking? Can we dive down into the depth of his soul, and see the first moving spring of action, and pronounce

with infallible certainty with respect to its moral character? Do we know the precise effect that early impressions have had upon his mind, and exactly to what extent allowance is to be made on this score? Our profound ignorance in all these particulars, shows how apt we are to be mistaken in our notions of the true character of our neighbor, and should lead us in no case to judge rashly. And should we, after a cool, patient, and impartial investigation, be compelled to decide unfavorably, we should even then, pass a decision with extreme diffidence—with that “*charity that believeth all things, hopeth all things.*” In many instances, no doubt, where the uncharitable has cast a shade of reproach, could he see the whole man as he is seen by his supreme Judge; shame would cover his face, to find that the very person he thought so little of, was at the very same time far above him in moral excellence.

2. As we are apt to be mistaken in our judgment with regard to the general character of persons, so are we equally so with regard to their evil intentions. An offence is taken from something that has been said or done to us. Now what has been said or done, may not have been the result of either ill-will or malice. It may have been the result of a wrong judgment they had hastily formed, or from some excited state of mind they may have been led to say, or act as they did. Such considerations should have a tendency to cool our resentment, especially when we reflect that we are equally liable to be influenced in the same way. And besides, they may have seriously considered their conduct, and have mourned and wept bitterly in secret on account of it.

Another reason why Christians should cultivate a forgiving spirit, is—

3. God's forgiving mercy towards them.

All of us have offended our Creator, by violating his law in thought, word and deed, ten thousand times. We have offended him under circumstances the most aggravated, against light and knowledge, amidst all the loud calls of his providence, his word, the strivings of his Spirit, and the clamors of conscience. We have thus rendered ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and sore displeasure; but upon repentance, he manifested to you his forgiving mercy. When he saw you writing bitter things against yourselves, mourning in sackcloth and ashes, he appointed unto you the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. And shall we who have been forgiven, and daily stand in need of forgiveness, not be ready to forgive others? If the eternal God act in the same way, what will become of us? Remember the words of our blessed Lord:—“*If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive*

*your trespasses.*"<sup>1</sup> As we desire forgiveness at the hands of our heavenly Father, let us see to it that we cultivate the spirit of forgiveness towards our brethren.

How are we to forgive?

To this, the apostle answers in the latter clause of the text, "*As Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*"

How does he forgive?

1. He forgives universally His language is—" *Thy sins which are many, are forgiven.*"<sup>2</sup> We should imitate Christ in this respect. We should make no reserves, but forgive all and every one of our brother's offences against us.

2. Christ sincerely forgives;—He never upbraids us for those sins he once forgives. He blots out the hand-writing against us. He remembers our sins against us no more. There is a pretended forgiveness that falls from the lips only, without

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi., 15.

<sup>2</sup> Luke vii., 47, 48.

flowing from the heart. You may have frequently heard persons profess to forgive in terms like the following. I pardon him for what he has done to me; I only wish the poor creature may be able to forgive himself. I leave him to God and his own conscience. Now this discovers a want of sincerity, and shows an inward bitterness of spirit, utterly at variance with a forgiving temper. This is not the way that Christ forgives:—He forgives sincerely “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.*”

How amiable and benign is the spirit of Christianity! Like its divine author, its high mission is to promote true peace, good order and happiness among men. In what a glorious state would be our world, were it entirely under its holy influence. Earth then, would be but the counterpart of heaven. If all cultivated the spirit of forbearance and forgiveness, where there is now strife, contentions, animosities and revenge, the angel of peace, with his

celestial train of meekness, gentleness, brotherly kindness and charity, would reign predominant in every bosom. But alas! how little of this spirit is found among men; how little even among the professed followers of Christ. What a readiness to put the worst construction upon the actions of the brethren. How prevalent is whispering, tale-bearing, and evil-speaking. What a satanic-like pleasure there is taken in circulating the tale of slander to the great injury of our neighbor.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be. You are called to the cultivation of an opposite temper, by the most endearing considerations. As children of one family you reverently bow down at the same table, partake of the same bread, drink of the same cup, and profess to be travelling to the same eternal home. In that blissful place, you expect to unite with all the redeemed of the Lord, in the same song:—“*Unto him that loved us and*



*washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.*"<sup>1</sup> How reasonable therefore is it that you should cherish for each other on your journey thitherward, the same feelings of brotherly kindness. "*Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.*"

<sup>1</sup> Rev. i., 5.

## S E R M O N V

### THE SIN OF GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.

“AND GRIEVE NOT THE HOLY SPIRIT OF GOD.” Eph. iv. 30.

GRIEF, as well as all other affections of the human heart which we find applied in the Scriptures to the Spirit of God, must necessarily be understood in a metaphorical sense. It especially refers to his mode of acting towards those who resist his influences, reject his kind offers, and not to any inward feeling which the term implies when it relates to finite man. With the course generally pursued by one who from just cause has been grieved at the conduct of another, we are perfectly familiar. Between this course and the conduct of the Spirit towards man in certain cases a comparison is here instituted.

When an earthly friend and benefactor becomes grieved in consequence of receiving from his beneficiary insults in return for the many favors bestowed, he withdraws all intimacy and friendship from such an one, until the barriers that stand in the way of a reconciliation are entirely removed. Now, the Holy Spirit is the Almighty Friend and liberal Benefactor of our fallen and degenerate race. But man too often requites his surpassing kindness and benevolence by acting in a way that causes the blessed Spirit to withdraw his enlightening and renovating influences, leaving him in his own native blindness and ignorance, to pursue the "*way that seemeth right*" unto him, though the "*ways thereof*" be the "*ways of death.*" We are therefore to understand the text as containing a solemn admonition against every thing that would hinder the success of this divine agent in his gracious and renewing operations upon the soul.

The Spirit of God, the third person in

the ever-adorable Trinity, is called '*holy*,' because of the infinite holiness of his character, and of the work of holiness which he begins and carries on in the hearts of his people. All the moral attributes; justice, goodness and truth, are possessed by him in common with the Father and the Son, in unbounded perfection. In the economy of redemption, the Holy Spirit is the grand agent whose office is to establish these principles of holiness in the souls of men. In order to this, "he spake by the prophets," inspired the apostles from whose sacred writings we may obtain right conceptions of the character of God, and of his will concerning us. He is still present in his church, to own and bless his word, and the ordinances of his house to the spiritual edification of all who yield to his gracious dictates. His success, however, is far from being universal. Though we have every reason to believe from the infinitude of his benevolence, that there is not a human

being on earth at the door of whose heart he has not repeatedly knocked for entrance; yet we find only here and there a few, comparatively, who have cordially submitted to the empire of his grace. The generality of men oppose him at every avenue through which he is wont to gain the ascendancy in the soul, and thus cause him, so to speak, to turn away grieved at the obduracy and impenitency of their hearts. I am sure that I now speak the experience of many of our hearers. In order that you may through the divine blessing be brought to a due sense of the awful guilt you are incurring, and of the danger to which you are thus exposing yourselves, we shall endeavor to point out some of the ways in which men *'grieve the Holy Spirit of God.'*

This is done,

1. By inconsideration. The want of calm, sober thought, is one of the greatest hinderances to a sinner's conversion to God.

The thunders of Sinai may roll, and tell him of those eternal calamities that await the ungodly beyond the grave; the sweet notes of redeeming love poured forth from an angel's voice will all be in vain, so long as the adversary of souls can contrive to keep him from a train of regular, sober thinking. The great Jehovah thus complained of his ancient people. "*I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know my people doth not consider.*"<sup>1</sup> The same complaint may be justly entered now. Against every impenitent soul here in divine presence, the Holy Spirit may justly urge the want of due consideration, as the great reason why his holy influences have not hitherto had their designed effect in each case. God has made our salvation to depend upon a cordial and hearty belief of the truth as it is in Jesus. "*With*

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i., 2, 3.

*the heart man believeth unto righteousness.*"<sup>1</sup> But we cannot thus *believe the truth*, unless we understand, or realize it in its personal application : nor can we thus understand it when presented to our minds unless we bestow upon it due thought and reflection. Thus you perceive how the thoughtless sinner defeats, if we may so speak, the purposes of divine grace. When the Holy Spirit presents to the impenitent mind divine truth, when he shows him his own character, his depraved and sinful state and the awful consequences that will inevitably follow, when he discovers unto him the character of God, his holiness, justice and truth, instead of his dwelling upon these truths in serious, sober and penitential thought, they are excluded from the mind to make room for subjects of a frivolous nature. So, the Heavenly Visitor is thus grieved and insulted at the cold repulse :—“*go thy*

<sup>1</sup> Rom. x., 10.

*way for this time ; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.”<sup>1</sup>*

The Holy Spirit is grieved,

2. By unholy conversation. The character of our minds give in general a direction to the train of our conversation. Hence we may form a very good judgment of the cast of our mind if we strictly observe the character of the conversation in which we take the greatest delight. “*Out of the abundance of the heart,*” says our Lord, “*the mouth speaketh.*”<sup>2</sup> Of the wicked it is said that, “*God is not in all his thoughts.*”<sup>3</sup> Now so long as the inconsiderate man continues so, and will not with divine assistance use the power that he has to bring his mind back from its wanderings and lead it in the path of serious, sober thinking, we cannot expect him to delight in such a conversation of which the Holy Spirit would approve. His thoughts run in a channel, that is

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxiv., 25.   <sup>2</sup> Matt. xii., 34.   <sup>3</sup> Psa. x., 4.



“earthly, sensual and devilish.” The conversation in which he delights, must consequently partake of the same character. How then can the Holy Spirit be otherwise than grieved to behold the tongues of men so much employed about temporal subjects, as totally to exclude those that are spiritual and eternal;—those subjects which excite the most adoring wonder and rapturous songs of joy among the redeemed in glory. But upon this point, we need not confine our remarks exclusively to the impenitent part of our hearers. Professing Christians are far from being faultless here. Indeed, the apostle Paul in giving the admonition contained in the text, evidently had his Christian brethren at Ephesus chiefly in view. In the words that immediately precede the text, he addressed them thus:—“*Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.*” The text

then follows.—“*And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.*”

The rule laid down in this connexion whereby Christians may avoid grieving the Spirit, is to attend to the preceding caution. But alas! how seldom is this rule attended to by professing Christians in their intercourse with each other. They may not violate the first part of the rule. Their conversation may not be of that character as to deserve to be styled, “*corrupt communication.*” But do they not often violate the second part? When they meet together, is the communication that proceeds out of their mouth *good to the use of edifying?* Is there no foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient? Is there no unkind and unnecessary exposures made of the real or supposed faults of neighbors? Is there no backbiting, no evil-speaking and slandering? Happy for the cause of religion were it so. But the reverse is too often the case. Instead of adhering to the

direction of the Apostle, aiming to *edify* those present, there is too often a disposition shown to inflict an injury upon the absent. And seeing this is the case, it is no wonder that we behold so many dwarfs in Christianity. It is no wonder that some run well for a season the Christian race, grow weary, turn back and bring a reproach upon the cause. You need wonder no longer, inconsistent professor, why you have no comfortable sense of God's love, no delight in the sanctuary, no relish for meditating on God's law, and attending on the ordinances of his house. You have grieved the Spirit of grace, and caused him to withdraw from you his comforting influences. When you have learned to "speak good of the name of the Lord, to be talking of his worship, glory, praise and wondrous works; to be telling of his loving kindness early in the morning, and of his truth in the night season;" then, may you expect him to lift upon you the light of his countenance,

and to bless you with light, life and vigor. On the contrary, if other matters of a vain, foolish and reprehensible character, are permitted to be themes to expatiate upon in your social intercourse; depend upon it a leanness will come over your souls; you will become like Samson shorn of his strength, weak as other men: your enemies will put out your eyes, leaving you to grope your way in the darkness of spiritual death. Again, the Spirit of God is grieved—

3. By sinful tempers and affections. In the verse that immediately follows the text, St. Paul thus exhorts his brethren: "*Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger and clamor, and evil-speaking, be put away from you with all malice.*" It is much to be lamented that these evil affections prevail too much among professing Christians in the present day. From the slightest provocation received from human frailty, some will rave and toss

themselves like an ox unaccustomed to the yoke. They consider it too much to be borne: and very often they dwell upon these little matters until the poison of the adder is found under their lips. Then the very name of their supposed adversary cannot be mentioned without eliciting the serpent hiss. And by indulging this revengeful spirit for a time, it finally settles down in malice, a rooted enmity, which makes a man more like Lucifer than any other sin this side of perdition. And can the Holy Spirit dwell in a bosom that is indulging affections like these? No, *never*. He can look with delight only upon his own '*fruit*,' which "*is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.*"<sup>1</sup> Sinful tempers and affections are the works of the devil. These works, the Spirit of God in all his merciful and gracious visits to man, aims to destroy

Resolve then, my Christian friends, in

<sup>1</sup> Gal. v., 22.

the strength of divine grace, to resist and overcome these enemies to your peace. Christianity designs us to be of an excellent spirit; to be transformed by the renewing of our minds: to be "*peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.*"<sup>1</sup> By exhibiting an opposite spirit we dishonor the cause of Christ, and consequently grieve the Spirit whose grand object is to advance it throughout the earth. We have mentioned several instances in which we may grieve the Spirit; but we may add in a general way that he is grieved by every species of sin, whether it consists in doing the things we ought not to do, or in leaving undone those things which we ought to do. We are all therefore guilty in this matter, and have need daily to pray: "O God, make clean our hearts within us; And take not thy Holy Spirit from us."

We shall endeavor now by a few considerations.

<sup>1</sup> James iii., 17.

*Second*, To urge the admonition contained in the text.

1. Consider the great dignity of the Personage slighted. In the violation of the rules of civility among men, the degree of criminality is determined by the character of the persons. Hence the same act that would be termed simply an insult from one man towards his equal in station, would be called a great indignity towards his superior, say his Governor. This arises from the inequality of position that subsists between the parties. Now if the degree of guilt contracted by grieving the Spirit, is determined by his superior dignity, where shall we find a term that can give us an adequate idea of the crime? The Spirit of God fills immensity. And where is the mind that can, in its grandest and loftiest conceptions, fully comprehend this great truth? Such knowledge is too high, too wonderful, it cannot be attained. This the enraptured

psalmist confessed, when, in the sublimest language he exclaimed :—“ *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*”<sup>1</sup> This uncreated, eternal, omnipotent, and omnipresent Being, man, dying man, whose breath is in his nostrils, can dare to insult! What horrid impiety! Consider,

2. His patience with you, notwithstanding your repeated provocations. When an earthly friend considers himself to be insulted, he generally stands off in cold indifference towards you, until some due acknowledgment be made; and even then his friendship is very apt to be mixed with a little bitterness. But the

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxxxix., 7, 8, 9.



Spirit of God, though repeatedly grieved, as often returns. He comes unasked, and stands at the door, and knocks long and loud, entreating us to open the door, that he may come in and sup with us, and we with him. Oh! how aggravated the guilt that must be contracted by a continued opposition to such stupendous love as this. But remember that God has said:—“*My Spirit shall not always strive with man.*”<sup>1</sup> There is an “*accepted time, a day of salvation,*”<sup>2</sup> in which we may seek and find mercy at the hand of God through Christ. That *time*, however, and that *day* may pass, when the things that belong to our peace may be forever hid from our eyes. By a long and continued series of opposition to the Spirit’s influences, the mind may at last become so hardened in unbelief, so unsusceptible of any permanent religious impression, by the ordinary means of grace, (and we have no right to expect any other means)

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi., 3.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. vi., 2.

as to cause the Holy Dove to take its everlasting flight. Forty years was he grieved at the disobedience of ancient Israel, and said—“*They do alway err in their hearts, and they have not known my ways. So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.*”<sup>1</sup> Take warning, then, my brethren, from this example, lest you fall under the same awful condemnation. That you have repeatedly opposed the friendly counsels, warnings and entreaties of the Spirit, you cannot deny. He has often called you to partake of the waters of life, and you have as often refused to hear; he has stretched out his hand to deliver you from the snares of the devil, but you have disregarded his kind intervention. Still he waits to be gracious unto you, notwithstanding your past ingratitude and innumerable provocations. Though your sins be as scarlet, He is ready and willing to make them as white as snow. Let his

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, iii., 10, 11.

long-suffering, goodness, and love, lead you to that repentance that needeth not be repented of again. Prostrate as you should be at the footstool of mercy, while you are acknowledging your repeated insults to the heavenly visitor, let your sincere, fervent and persevering prayer ascend to the Lord, whose ear is ever attentive; and let its burden be—

“Stay, thou insulted Spirit, stay,  
Though I have done thee such despite;  
Nor cast the sinner quite away,  
Nor take thine everlasting flight.  
Though I have most unfaithful been,  
And long in vain thy grace received;  
Ten thousand times thy goodness seen,  
Ten thousand times thy goodness grieved;  
Yet, oh! the mourning sinner spare,  
In honor of my great High-Priest.  
Nor in thy righteous anger swear,  
T’exclude me from thy people’s rest.  
My soul lies humbled in the dust,  
And owns thy dreadful sentence just;  
Look down, O Lord, with pitying eye  
And save the soul condemn’d to die.”

## S E R M O N   V I

### THE FORBEARANCE AND RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE OF GOD.

“THE LORD IS SLOW TO ANGER, AND GREAT IN POWER,  
AND WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED.” Nahum. i. 3.

IN our attempts to worship the God of heaven, it is highly important that we entertain, as far as possible, just conceptions of the divine character; lest, while we profess to worship Him with our lips, we at the same time, be open to the rebuke: “*Ye worship, ye know not what.*” We are summoned to the house of prayer at this time, under circumstances of unusual interest. It has been recommended by the Chief Magistrate, that this day be devoted by the people throughout the country to prayer and fasting. And perhaps, there is no view

of the character of God more proper for the mind to be duly impressed with on an occasion like the present, than the one contained in the text—his forbearing mercy, in connexion with his power and justice.

That Jehovah, whose perfections are unlimited, should at any time, in the smallest degree imaginable, be agitated, or disturbed by any inward emotion like mortal man, is impossible. Passion is an attribute that belongs exclusively to imperfect beings, who require some moving principle to excite them to action. But no such necessity can be supposed to exist in the great I AM, without involving the most blasphemous absurdity. Hence, those portions of scripture that ascribe anger, wrath, jealousy, or any other passion, to the Deity, are always to be understood in a figurative, not in a literal sense. In every case, it refers to his mode of proceeding, or acting, and not to any inward emotion. As men, when provoked to

anger, generally take steps to avenge themselves upon their enemies, so, when God executes the sentence of His righteous laws upon the rebels against His government, He is said to be avenged, not that He, like man, takes a malignant pleasure in the destruction of His enemies, but He is said to be avenged, because in such a case, His mode of procedure resembles the steps that men take when they are under the influence of anger. With these preliminary remarks, we shall enter upon the consideration of the several propositions contained in the text in the order in which they are presented.

First:—“*The Lord is slow to anger.*” That is, He is slow to execute punishment upon the transgressors of His law. We have a striking illustration of the truth of this proposition.

1. In the case of our fore-parents. That eventful period, when they per-

petrated the crime that brought death into the world and all our woe, in that very hour, Jehovah could in justice have banished them from the happy bowers of Paradise, and consigned them to the region of eternal misery and despair. It was thus He dealt with Lucifer and his rebellious crew. "*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.*"<sup>1</sup> But instead of dealing thus with our fallen progenitors, he granted them a day of grace—he gave them a firm ground of hope in that cheering and comprehensive promise: "*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*"<sup>2</sup> That they had sufficient time granted to avail themselves, as we believe they did, of that gracious promise, is clear, from Adam's protracted

<sup>1</sup> Jude 6.<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii., 15.

term of life, which was extended beyond the limit of nine hundred years. The same penitence, faith and obedience, that marked the character of Abel, when he offered "a more excellent sacrifice than Cain," were without doubt, equally prominent in our fore-parents, when "God made coats of skins and clothed them." It is not without good reason supposed, that this clothing was the skins of beasts slain in sacrifice by divine appointment, as typical of the one great sacrifice of Christ, who, in the fulness of time, "gave himself a ransom for all."

2. Another illustration of the truth that God is SLOW TO ANGER, we have in the case of the Antediluvians. They had not only multiplied greatly in point of numbers, but their sins and iniquities also had increased to an alarming extent. "*The wickedness of man was great in the earth, every imagination of the thoughts of*



*his heart was only evil continually.*"<sup>1</sup> Being thus corrupt at the very fountain, it followed as a natural consequence, that "*the earth was filled with violence through them.*"<sup>2</sup> But what was the conduct of God towards that guilty people? He mercifully warned them of the awful consequence of their overgrown wickedness by his servant Noah, who was "a preacher of righteousness" to that devoted people. He strove with them by his Holy Spirit. He bore with their bad manners; he waited for their reformation for the space of one hundred and twenty years, before he performed "*his act, his strange act.*"

3. The same slowness to anger marked the conduct of God towards his chosen people Israel. They were under his special guidance, government and protection: they were favored above all other nations with the means of religious in-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. vi., 5.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. vi., 13.

struction, temporal security and prosperity. They were “nourished and brought up as children.” When they groaned under the Egyptian yoke, God delivered them with a high hand and with an outstretched arm. When they travelled through the dry and barren desert where no water was, he caused streams to flow from the flinty rock to refresh their fainting spirits. He rained down manna from heaven to relieve them from the pains of hunger. But notwithstanding they enjoyed such distinguished privileges and blessings at the hand of God, they were far from bringing forth those fruits of purity and good living which might have been reasonably expected. There were, it is true, some honorable exceptions; but the general character given them in the holy scriptures, is that of “a rebellious and stiff-necked people,”—they were bent on backsliding—ever ready to depart from their Almighty Sovereign and Friend, and to conform to the abominable prac-

tices and customs of the surrounding heathen. But did He speedily give them up to work out their own destruction with greediness? No. He bore with them for upwards of fifteen hundred years after he had delivered them out of the land of Egypt and out of the house of bondage. Moreover, when they had well nigh filled up the cup of their iniquity in rejecting the only Savior of sinful man, still, the Lord forbore to visit them according to the demerit of their crimes. The axe it is true, was lying at the root of the tree; but he did not speedily issue forth the order,—*cut it down*—its day of salvation was protracted a little longer. Accordingly, the blessed Savior, after his resurrection from the dead, in commissioning his Apostles to spread the glad tidings of mercy universally, instructed them, especially, to begin at Jerusalem—to give the first offer of salvation to them who had crucified the Lord of life and glory. Thus the history of that peculiar people

clearly illustrates the truth that *the Lord is slow to anger*.

Again. The character of the Gentiles, contrasted with God's conduct towards them, is a further confirmation of the first proposition of the text. A very startling, but graphic picture of their wretchedly depraved character is drawn by the Apostle Paul in the opening of his masterly epistle to the Romans. "*Being filled,*" says he, "*with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding; covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they, which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*"<sup>1</sup> Here then, we have the moral

<sup>1</sup> Rom. i., 29, 32.

portraiture of the Gentiles, as it presented itself to the mind of the inspired Apostle. Yet we find that they were not swept off the face of the earth as with a besom of destruction. The same Apostle says,—  
“*And the times of this ignorance God winked at,*”<sup>1</sup> i. e. He bore with them in mercy, in order to give them a clear and explicit call to repentance. But we need not confine your attention to facts of ancient date, since we have a sufficient illustration of the truth under consideration, in our own day and time. See, how the Lord’s day is profaned; the day consecrated to holiness and God is devoted by multitudes, young and old, to idleness, frivolity and sinful pleasures. How many acts of inhumanity, cruelty, oppression, high-handed robbery, murder, treachery, and lewdness, are every day practised amidst the blaze of moral and religious light. These things are of so frequent occurrence, that they almost cease to

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii., 30.

affect us. See the multiplied grogeries, gambling cellars and dens of infamy which are thronged, not only by the old and hardened in crime, but thronged by the young men of our city, whose downward course is blasting the best hopes of their parents and friends. Oh! were it possible for us to take a panoramic view of all the abominations committed here during the space of twenty-four hours only, we should be overwhelmed at the sight: we should be ready to regard ourselves as dwelling among incarnate demons instead of human, intelligent, and moral beings. Horror-stricken at the sight, we would tremble under the most agonizing apprehensions, lest the earth would not long sustain such a mass of guilt, pollution and crime. Now, we should bear in mind, that the Supreme Ruler of the Universe, surveys with one comprehensive glance, not only all the crimes of a single nation, but of the world at large. He has a clear and distinct view of every

species of wickedness that is now, or ever has been committed. Yet we behold his sun rising upon the just, and upon the unjust, we have the regular return of the seasons: "*He gives us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*" Why is this? Since the wickedness of man is still great in the earth, why do we not see the vials of unmitigated wrath, poured out upon its guilty inhabitants? Why do we not see the heavens gathering blackness and the red thunderbolt hurled down in flaming vengeance? To these inquiries unassisted reason can give no satisfactory answers. To see virtue, humanity, truth and justice lying prostrate upon the earth, while vice, cruelty and gross injustice receive honor and support, would be to us an incomprehensible mystery, were it not for the revelation of the truth contained in the text, that, *the Lord is slow to anger.* This truth will receive further confirmation from its application to our own indi-

vidual cases. There is not one among us arriven to years of maturity, who upon a review of his life can fail to see the clearest evidences in his own case of the truth contained in the first part of our text. Let conscience speak, and she will whisper in the ears of some thus. You are now well-stricken in years; you were born in a Christian land; you have heard the sound of salvation ten thousand times, but alas! you cannot find in all your life one single day truly devoted to the service of that God in whom you live, move, and have your being, and who has made every provision for your present and everlasting happiness. To another she would say, in the spring-tide of life you sought the Lord and found him to the joy and satisfaction of your soul; but suffering yourself to be drawn aside by your giddy companions, and through the deceitfulness of your own heart, you became entangled again in the yoke of bondage; you crucified afresh the Lord of



glory ; put him to open shame ; and now, you are ten-fold more the child of Satan than before. To us all she would bring home the charge, of having too often “done the things which we ought not to have done, and” of having “left undone those things which we ought to have done.” But notwithstanding this, our lots are still among the living and not with the dead. So far from having any visible marks of divine vengeance upon us, we are still prisoners of hope, within the reach of mercy, having the privilege of partaking of the blessings of pardon, peace and holiness in this world, as preparatory for the enjoyment of eternal happiness in the world to come. Brethren, we all stand this day living witnesses that *the Lord is slow to anger.*

Second. This attribute of God is no evidence of his want of ability to execute upon transgressors the sentence of his violated law, for the prophet further adds that

He is ‘*great in power.*’ Men may be

sometimes slow in effecting their purposes, because they are unable to accomplish their ends with despatch. No such inability belongs to Jehovah. What can stay his hand, who, “in the beginning created the heaven and the earth—who spake and it was done; who commanded, and it stood fast.” Indeed, his slowness to anger, or long-forbearance, is perhaps, the greatest proof of his power that we can have any conception of. In contemplating the magnitude, the number and velocity of the planets, we are justly struck with amazement at the great power that upholds and sustains them. But what comparison can there be between the power that is put forth in the material system, and that which is manifested in his long-forbearance towards sinners. The former is power over matter, the latter is power over his own uncreated Being. The exhibition of monstrosity in wickedness, arouses at once the indignation of men, and nothing but the want of

authority and power prevent them in such cases, from visiting it with summary punishment. But this is an evidence of our weakness. God “is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—Heaven is impure in his sight.” Yet he is cognizant of the great mass of human crime, but strikes not. His own inflexible justice and truth call for vengeance against the transgressors; but his long-forbearance, holds back the bolt. Here lies the “*thunder of his power*” which is beyond human comprehension.

Again, nor does his slowness to anger afford any security to the finally impenitent; for it is further added that

He “*will not at all acquit the wicked.*” Though he bear long with sinners, yet retributive justice will overtake them at last. The fate of several nations as well as individuals may be adduced as illustrative of this. The ante-diluvians, the Sodomites, the Egyptians, the Ninevites,

the Jews, all stand upon the historian's page, as indisputable evidences of the truth that He will not at all acquit the finally impenitent. Now, as nations can exist as such in this world only, and as God is unchangeably the same, when they become involved in national guilt, nothing but a timely repentance can avert a national punishment. Avarice, pride and ambition might be expiated upon as sins of which this nation stands guilty before God; but the great master sin of the nation is, that of sanctioning that system of outrage, which allows man to hold property in his fellow-man, the system, that blots out the moral image traced upon the soul by the hand of God, and writes thereupon—'*it is a thing.*' It requires no labored attempt to show that the nation is verily guilty in this matter. In whatever department we look, whether legislative, literary, civil or religious, we find in the general spirit and conduct of each, a determined opposition to the

universal rights of man. And what marks do we observe of true repentance? Is there a general concern upon the subject? Are the people awakened to a sense of their awful guilt? Are they bringing forth fruit meet for repentance? Are they like Zaccheus restoring four-fold to their wronged neighbors? Far from it, far from it. The great absorbing theme dwelt upon from one end of the country to the other is *gain*. The obligation "*to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God,*" is not taken into the account. Here a general apathy prevails. It is certainly a very imposing sight to behold an entire people, as at this day, presenting themselves before God in the attitude of humble suppliants. Prayer and fasting are some of the signs of penitence, and when accompanied with the other marks, viz., the forsaking of evil, and the practising of good works, they are well-pleasing to God; otherwise they are of no avail. When the Ninevites under a

dread of God's judgments clothed themselves in sack-cloth, and cried mightily to God, it is said; that, "*God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not.*"<sup>1</sup> But what does the Lord say to his people when they had given up themselves to unrighteousness, and still offered to Him a formal worship. "*To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations: incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear:*" and the reason he assigns is: "*your hands are full of blood.*" Hence the exhortation;

<sup>1</sup> Jonah iii., 10.

“*Wash you, make you clean ; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes ; cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment ; relieve the oppressed ; judge the fatherless ; plead for the widow.*”<sup>1</sup> The point upon which their happiness or misery depended is thus stated. “*If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land. But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured by the sword : for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.*”<sup>2</sup> This threatening was signally executed upon the Jewish nation in the terrible slaughter which took place when their proud city was besieged by the Roman army under Titus. And it awfully exemplified the inspired declaration : “*Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.*”<sup>3</sup> With regard to the impenitent, as individuals, though in this world they find by experience that “*the way of transgressors is hard :*” yet the full measure of

<sup>1</sup> Isa. i., 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17

<sup>2</sup> Isa. i., 19, 20.      <sup>3</sup> Prov. xiv., 34.

their punishment will not be meted out to them until the final judgment. Then God “*will render to every man according to his deeds.*”<sup>1</sup> “*Unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.*”<sup>2</sup> Be awakened then, my impenitent hearers, to a sense of your danger. Let God’s patience with you lead to a timely repentance. This is the gracious design Heaven has in view, in bearing with your bad manners from day to day and from year to year. He is slow to anger under all your provocations, in order that you may be suitably affected, and so be led to repentance and salvation. Abuse not his mercy by hardening your hearts and stiffening your necks. Think not that because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, you will therefore escape punishment. The arm



of Divine Justice may be long delayed, yet it will fall at last upon your guilty head with accumulated vengeance. And who can endure the idea of falling into the prunitive hands of Him who is omnipotent in power! May you avert this, by a timely repentance, by an unreserved dedication of yourselves to His service. Then, his power, justice and mercy will combine to ensure your present and everlasting happiness.

## S E R M O N   V I I .

PRICE IN HAND OF THE FOOLISH TO GET  
WISDOM.

“ WHEREFORE IS THERE A PRICE IN THE HAND OF A FOOL TO  
GET WISDOM, SEEING HE HATH NO HEART TO IT ? ”

Prov. xvii. 16.

WISDOM is a gem of inestimable value. Nothing so strongly marks the superiority of one class of men above another, than their pre-eminence in wisdom. For the various arts of civilized life, the innumerable comforts and conveniences we enjoy, to which the native children of the forest are entire strangers; we are indebted to the operations of superior wisdom. It guides the mariner across the pathless waste of waters, and leads him back over mountain billows safe to

his own kindred and home laden with the riches of foreign climes. It scours the surface of our globe, investigates the numerous vegetables of the verdant kingdom; marks their genera, their species, their different properties, their agencies, especially in arresting the ravages of disease to which man is liable in this state of discipline and trial. It penetrates the bowels of the earth and explores the wonders and riches of the mineral kingdom. It mounts up to heaven; *up*, at a dizzy height, and there observes the circuitous pathway of the planets, and with its vast line measures them as they roll along in the wide expanse. The order and regularity that obtain among men flow from this source. We sometimes see different nations involved in angry disputes, and led to the very point of bringing about all the horrors of a desolating war. Fortunately, however, superior wisdom in due season rises up in her majesty and makes her voice heard above the "*sound of many*

*waters* :”—the tumultuous murmurs of the people are at once hushed : and the hostile spirit with its menacing array of the weapons of death, gives place to the pleasing spectacle of harmony, fraternity, peace, and their ever-attendant blessings. In this limited view of wisdom’s operations, all are ready to acknowledge its paramount value and excellency. But the Holy Scriptures speak of, and the text alludes to, a wisdom of a much higher order still.

Job, in a figurative style common among the orientals, inquires where man’s highest wisdom is to be found : and having searched in vain through every department of nature, he at length arrived at the true and only fountain. “*But where shall wisdom be found? and where is the place of understanding? Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not in me. It cannot be gotten*

*for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire. The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it shall not be for jewels of fine gold. No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom is above rubies. The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold. Whence then cometh wisdom? and where is the place of understanding? Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air. Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears. God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof. For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven. To make the weight for the winds; and he weigheth the waters by measure. When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder. Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out.*

*And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ; and to depart from evil is understanding.”*<sup>1</sup> Thus we perceive that the revelation God made to man in the beginning, in which consists his highest wisdom, is, “*the fear of the Lord.*”

There is a servile dread of God, arising from a sense of guilt and the awful desert of sin, which sometimes so harasses the impenitent, as to cause them to agonize under awful forebodings of coming wrath. But the principle referred to in the text, is a holy, reverential *fear* of offending the Divine Majesty, and a tender concern to please him in all our walks and ways. It includes the whole of practical obedience to the commands of God. Good old “*Noah moved with*” this holy “*fear,*” when in prompt obedience to the command of his Maker, he “*prepared an ark to the saving of his house.*”<sup>2</sup> This holy

<sup>1</sup> Job xxviii., 12–28.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. xi., 7.

principle can never spring from unrenewed nature. It is, "*the wisdom that is from above,*" and, "*is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*"<sup>1</sup>

Whoever takes the hand of this heavenly guide, and follows her directions, shall pass safely through the perilous voyage of life, laden, not with corruptible treasures; but, with the riches of Christ and his gospel, and arrive at *home, home* to heaven, where they shall unite with kindred spirits in celebrating the praises of God and the Lamb forever and ever. This wisdom, in her ethereal flights, stops not among the rolling orbs of the planetary world. She mounts up infinitely higher. Her native place is in the palace of the King of Saints and angels. Thither she ascends, and unfolds to the eye of faith, the glorious reward of righteousness:—

<sup>1</sup> Jam. iii., 17.

heavenly mansions — everlasting joys —  
“*the crown of righteousness, which the Lord,  
the righteous judge, shall give at that day,  
unto all them that love his appearing.*”<sup>1</sup>

To be destitute of this heavenly wisdom, and unconcerned about obtaining it, however wise we may be as it respects things that pertain to this life, we are in the eye of God's Word, regarded as “*fools.*” This is indeed, a mortifying epithet, but let us see whether it be not very properly applied to all those who “*have not the fear of God before their eyes.*” If idleness, if a neglect to improve the proper season to labor, if a want of forethought to lay up provision for future necessities, be marks of folly in a temporal sense; then, the man who has the great work of his personal salvation before him, and spends all his time in matters of minor importance; who neglects, in “*the accepted time,*” to pro-

<sup>1</sup> 2d Tim. iv., 8.



vide himself with that robe of righteousness, in which he “ may appear pure and blameless at the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ;” he, who thus acts, may very properly regard himself as being superlatively *foolish*.

What a numerous multitude among our fellow-men show themselves to be deserving of this opprobrious epithet. There is not a city, town, or village, but what is crowded with them. They make up the great mass of mankind. Hence, the world may be compared to a bedlam. The number of our fellow-creatures deserving to bear this epithet being so vast, it will not be a matter of wonder, if a goodly number be found enclosed within these sacred walls. We cannot be fairly charged with a want of charity in thinking, that a little honest and sober reflection on the part of some of our hearers, would constrain them to class themselves with the number. There is such a thing as partial insanity. A

crazy man may converse quite rationally upon certain topics ; but, so soon as you approach some particular subject, he reasons no longer. Thus it is with man. Place before him his temporal interests, and he acts like a reasonable being. Bend his mind upon the various sciences, and the deep researches of his reasoning powers, demonstrate his near relation to superior beings. But lay before him the all-important subject of religion, and immediately you perceive the change. However eminent he may be as a scholar, a statesman, a philosopher ; however wise and prudent he may be in his affairs as a farmer, mechanic or merchant, with regard to '*the one thing needful,*' he gives little, or no signs of reason. Some are totally unconcerned about the things that belong to their present and everlasting peace. Others have a feeble sense of the importance of this subject, but put off the due consideration of it to a more convenient

season. Another class, with more energetic folly than the former, make the attempt to serve both God and Mammon—to give half the heart to the Lord, the other half to the world. Others again, merely put on the garb of religion, the form of godliness, while they are destitute of its life and power. In this way, the great majority of mankind are acting as it relates to their spiritual and eternal welfare. Man thus suffers his precious moments to pass away unimproved, till, alas! in an hour when he thinks not death comes: “*he giveth up the ghost, and where is he?*”<sup>1</sup> Is this a rational mode of acting? What would be thought of any set of persons who acted thus, when they had some great temporal interest at stake, in danger of losing all their property by fire? If the most of them were seen to be totally unconcerned; others putting off their exertions to save their effects, to a more convenient season;

<sup>1</sup> Job xiv., 10.

others using one hand to secure their all; and others merely putting on the appearance of concern; would they not be regarded as insane persons? But how much more foolish do they appear, who act thus, in relation to their present and eternal welfare. A man may lose his earthly goods, but in the course of time, by industry, frugality and economy, he may succeed in accumulating an equivalent to all his losses. But when the soul is lost, all is lost—the joys of heaven once lost, are lost forever—the soul that descends to the dismal regions of despair, shall never be cheered by the glad sound of salvation. How egregious then, is the folly of ungodly men! If their folly was unavoidable, they would be excusable. For no one can be fairly blamed for unavoidable ignorance. But this is not the case. For their folly, they alone are to blame.

The text says—

“THERE IS A PRICE IN THE HAND OF A FOOL TO GET WISDOM.”

By this we are to understand, that the means to obtain wisdom, through the benevolence of God, are placed in our hands. We have reason, conscience, the holy scriptures, the ordinances of God's house, the preaching of the gospel, the aids of the Holy Spirit, liberty of access to God through Christ, by prayer and supplication; we have pious parents, relations, friends, or good books to assist us. Here then is a *price*, a talent, or rather, talents of inestimable value placed into our hands to obtain wisdom; and by persevering in the right use of these means, we cannot fail to attain it. St. James says,—“*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is*

*like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord.”*<sup>1</sup>

But with all these advantages in their hands to become wise unto salvation, it is a melancholy fact, that too many of our race remain foolish notwithstanding. The ungodly are wont to frame many excuses for their folly in continuing in their wretched state. They are all so frivolous in their character, that it is needless to detail. But whatever excuses they may frame to account for their not being truly wise, in the text, the grand reason is declared to be, that they have “*no heart to it.*” “*Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?*” That is, he has no sincere desire to obtain it. He will not be at the pains of considering long upon its nature, hence its transcendent excellencies are hid from his view.

<sup>1</sup> James i., 5, 7.

And seeing no beauty in it, he has no ardent desires after it. His desires are strong for the perishable objects of time and sense. He can ardently exclaim:—  
*“What shall we eat? or What shall we drink? or Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*<sup>1</sup> *“But none saith, where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night.”*<sup>2</sup>

Since ungodly men, with all the facilities kind Providence has given them to be wise, continue wretchedly foolish notwithstanding, the wise man enquires,—*Wherefore* is it that they have these advantages? The question implies, that these means of wisdom are unworthily placed,—that they are of no essential benefit to the possessor. Hence, he says, *Wherefore* is this? *“Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?”*

We may answer, that this price is given—

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vi., 31.

<sup>2</sup> Job xxxv., 10.

1st. As a clear demonstration of the proposition, that God taketh "*no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live.*"<sup>1</sup> "*I exhort,*" says St. Paul, "*that supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks be made for all men. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*"<sup>2</sup> "*God so loved the world,*" said our Saviour, "*that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*"<sup>3</sup> As a confirmation of the glorious truths here announced, God has graciously placed into the hand of every man ample means, which if rightly used, will compass his present and everlasting happiness. So the great Father of us all, may utter now the same vehement complaint of every ungodly impenitent sinner, as he did with regard to the base ingrati-

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xxxiii., 11. <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. ii., 13, 4. <sup>3</sup> John iii., 16.



tude of his people of old—" *What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?*"<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the "price" is placed into the hand of every man.

2d. That in the great day of account the finally impenitent shall not be able to show any reason why the sentence of condemnation should not be passed upon them for their neglect of improving it. In the parable of the talents the servant who had *one*, offered as an excuse for not improving it, his knowledge of the severity of his Lord; "*reaping where*" he had "*not sown, and gathering where*" he had "*not strawed.*"<sup>2</sup> But he thus condemned himself. And his Lord showed him, that the very excuse he offered, was a more urgent reason why he should have improved the talent intrusted to his charge. Hence he was struck dumb: stripped of every extenuating plea—forced

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah v., 4.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxv., 26.

tacitly to acknowledge the sentence:—  
“*Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness;*” to be the just demerit of his consummate folly. Thus will it be in the last great day with all who shall be found destitute of heavenly wisdom. When all the golden opportunities they suffered to pass away unimproved; the many glorious privileges neglected; the repeated calls and entreaties of God’s providence, word and Spirit that have been slighted; when all these are brought to their remembrance; while the Judge is pronouncing the sentence, “*Depart ye cursed,*” they will be constrained in inexpressible agony to say, Amen, to their own condemnation. And what a bitter ingredient will this be in that cup of indignation, which shall be their portion forever and ever—self-condemnation—forever exclaiming, I have destroyed myself!

See the importance then, my hearers,

of duly improving the *price* that God in his goodness has placed into your hands to get wisdom. You are stewards of the manifold grace of God. And the day is at hand, when you will be called to stand at his dread tribunal, to render a strict account of your stewardship. You are surrounded with every necessary facility to enable you to make your peace with God, your calling and election sure. Through the providence of God your lot has been cast, not amidst the darkness of Paganism, superstition and idolatry, but in a Christian land, under the moral influences of Christian sabbaths, religious counsel and example. You have the Bible in your hand, that blessed book, which is "*a lantern unto our feet, and a light unto our path,*" which informs us of the great love of our heavenly Father in giving his "Son to die for our offences, and to be raised *again* for *our* justification," and his Holy Spirit to enlighten, renew and sanctify our depraved nature.

Now if you fail to bring forth the fruit of righteousness, after having all these superior privileges and blessings at hand, how tremendous must be the punishment that awaits you in the eternal world! How can ye escape wrath to the uttermost?

I beseech you, let not the grace of God be granted you in vain. Avoid the doom of the wicked and slothful servant. In all your getting, get wisdom. Continue no longer under the shameful reproach of having "*no heart to it.*" Seek after it, for it is better than rubies, and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. Seek it diligently and perseveringly. For "if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." And what "*thy hand findeth to do,*" on this great subject, "*do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave whither thou goest.*"



## SERMON VIII.

### THE SHORTNESS AND UNCERTAINTY OF TIME.

“BUT THIS I SAY BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT.”

1 Cor. vii., 29.

THE sentiment contained in the words of the text, is one of those solemn truths which the mind of man is averse duly to contemplate. Some airy phantom, some earthly vanity, is always cordially invited to a prominent place in his thoughts, while this serious truth is banished from the mind as an unwelcome guest. The promise of enjoying yet many days of health, ease and pleasure here, though it be a lie conjured up by a corrupt and deceitful imagination, is listened to by the worldling with delight; while the truth, which reason, observation and divine

revelation confirm, is practically rejected. But however averse we may be to give this subject that due consideration which its importance demands, its truthfulness nevertheless, remains the same. Our indifference to it cannot alter it. It becomes us, therefore, as rational and accountable beings, calmly, but seriously to consider, how short the time is that we have to remain upon the stage of action. And may the Holy Spirit help us so to consider it, that we may be led to apply our hearts unto heavenly wisdom.

“*The time is short.*” Compared with that eternal duration which is without beginning or end; *time*, in its most extended sense, stretching out its line from the dawn of creation to the final consummation of all things, is short. For though our planet should continue its diurnal and annual revolution a thousand times longer than it has already, a period is to arrive, when its present career through its ap-

pointed pathway will be terminated—when “*it shall wax old as doth a garment, and be changed.*” But, eternity, properly speaking, has neither beginning nor end. There can be no proportion, therefore, between the longest duration of time and that of eternity. But it becomes us to contemplate that portion of time which is parcelled out to us as individuals, by the Author and giver of life. And how exceedingly small is the part allotted us. In the Adamic age, the life of man was reckoned up by hundreds. Adam, the father of the human race, lived nine hundred and thirty years before he died. Seth, his son, lived nine hundred and twelve years, and he died. Enos, his grand-son, lived nine hundred and five years, and he died: and so the catalogue proceeds in its statement of the lengthened lives of the patriarchs who lived before the flood. But in the time of the Psalmist David, we find human life to be reckoned up not by hundreds as before,



but by scores. "*The days of our years,*" says he, "*are three-score years and ten, and if by reason of strength they be four-score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow, for it is soon cut off, and we fly away.*"<sup>1</sup> As if years were too large a point by which to reckon up the shortness of human life, the Scriptures count it by months. "*The number of his months are with thee.*"<sup>2</sup> Very frequently it is reckoned by days. "*Man, that is born of a woman,*" says Job, "*is of few days.*"<sup>3</sup> Nay, it is accounted but one day "*Till he shall accomplish as an hireling his day.*"<sup>4</sup> The apostle Paul, compares it to a still shorter period—a moment. "*Our light affliction,*" says he, "*which is but for a moment.*"<sup>5</sup> So short is human life, as if there could not be any thing in nature to give a just representation of it, the Psalmist says,—"*Mine age is as nothing before thee.*"<sup>6</sup> A very slight

<sup>1</sup> Psa. xc., 10.

<sup>2</sup> Job xiv., 1.

<sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. iv., 17.

<sup>4</sup> Job xiv., 5.

<sup>5</sup> Job xiv., 6.

<sup>6</sup> Psa. xxxix., 5.

observation will lead us to acknowledge the justness of this melancholy view of human life. If we look over this congregation, or any other assembled for a similar purpose; if we take a larger survey, and view the community in which we live, how few comparatively do we see whose heads are crowned with the frost of seventy winters. We behold only a few here and there moving along the shore of time, as relics of days gone by; and their fewness are as monuments bearing our text as an inscription, to be read and seriously pondered by every beholder. The silent but significant language of their whitened locks and furrowed cheeks, to the present generation, is, "BRETHREN, THE TIME IS SHORT."—It is true that we have reached our three-score years and ten, but this point in human existence, the great majority of our race never attain. The large circle of those with whom we passed the blithesome hours of youth, have long since-shot the awful

gulf of a boundless eternity. A few of us stand trembling upon the shore, to admonish you with a silent but impressive voice, how vain it is for you to calculate upon attaining the days of our lengthened years. For long, long before man reaches this, he enters the narrow house appointed for all living. The most of our fellow creatures die like a flower blasted in the morning, or at noon, a fact, that shows how delusive is the hope of a protracted life. Another point worthy of our consideration is, that *time* is as uncertain as it is short. The present moment is all that we can safely calculate upon. The future is veiled in the bosom of the great Eternal. He only knows whether or not any one present shall survive the setting sun. We know not what a day may bring forth. Neither youth nor superior strength is the least security against the sudden attack of death. His shafts fly so promiscuously, that none can tell who will be the next victim. Sudden as

lightning sometimes his arrows fly, and wound and kill in the twinkling of an eye. Before another day rolls over our heads, for all that we know to the contrary, some one of us may behold that veil removed which now hides from our view, the grand, but awful scenes of the eternal world.

The short and uncertain tenure of human life would be of small moment were it not connected with other results of the most solemn and overwhelming character. God, in his great wisdom and goodness saw fit to create different ranks and orders of beings, and to place them in different localities in his wide dominions, to answer certain good purposes. Upon our earth we behold a variety of living creatures, some of which, so far as we know, have no relation at all to another state of being—all their movements are confined within the small circle of time here allotted to them. But man is placed in circumstances quite different. He, like

the other creatures, has but a small space of time to carry on his operations here, but his movements are not confined, like theirs, within the little boundary marked out to him in this world. No. His dominion over the rest of the creatures, his superior skill, his boundless desires, his hopes, his fears, all more than intimate that he has within him a spirit, destined to survive this material system, and that his future happiness or misery will depend upon the character formed in this state of mortality. These solemn and overwhelming truths, indicated by the light of reason, are set forth in the brightness of a sun-beam upon the inspired page. We are there told not only that life is short, that "*it is appointed unto men once to die,*" but we are also told that "*after this the judgment*"<sup>1</sup>—that "*God will render to every man according to his deeds,—to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honor, immortality, eternal*

<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, ix., 27.

*life,” while on the other hand, “unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul that doeth evil.”*<sup>1</sup> These considerations, brethren, stamp upon our time an incalculable value, connected as it is with our eternal destinies. We may contemplate the shortness of life as an abstract truth, somewhat unmoved. But it becomes us to consider it as connected with its thrilling results—we should ever bear in mind that our few days here below will tell whether we shall be happy forever in heaven, or forever miserable in hell. This is the sober view in which we should always regard this subject; this is the view in which the Apostle regarded it when he lifted up his voice and pronounced with such solemn emphasis, saying,—“*But this I say, brethren, the time is short.*”

<sup>1</sup> Rom. ii., 6, 7, 8, 9.

Let us inquire now, what influence this subject should have upon our life and conduct. Should the thought, that in a few days we shall be in the world of spirits, have the effect of filling our minds with superstitious dread, and of imbittering our whole lives with the fearful apprehension of death? No. This course would have the tendency of rendering our lives still shorter, and would be contrary to sound reason, and contrary to God's express command:—"Thou shalt not kill." Again, because our days are few, should we therefore leave all converse with our fellow-men, seclude ourselves in some retired cell, and there spend our time in mortifying the body for the good of the soul? This would be a superstitious absurdity, but no part of Christian duty. Utter seclusion from the world is nowhere enjoined. The Bible addresses us as members of society, and enjoins upon each in his vocation and calling to serve the Lord faithfully—"to glorify God in body and

spirit which are his." The godly are represented therein, as the light of the world. And they are called upon in all their relations, whether domestic, civil or religious, to let their light shine, that others seeing their good works may be led to glorify their Father in heaven. In the words that immediately follow the text, the apostle clearly shows what effect the sentiment therein contained should have upon us: "*But this I say, brethren, the time is short. It remaineth therefore, that they that have wives be as though they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use this world as not abusing it, for the fashion of this world passeth away.*"

We learn from this subject, the importance of setting a proper estimate on all earthly things—of regarding them as they really are, fleeting and swiftly pass-



ing away. We may lawfully enjoy, yet we should always endeavor to preserve ourselves from immoderate attachment to the most endearing objects. We should sit loose from the world, and be found cultivating that pious frame of mind that will enable us in cheerful submission to take our departure whenever a wise and gracious Providence shall call us so to do. Such a temper as this will keep the mind properly balanced. With its affections set on things above and not on things on the earth, it will not be puffed up with the joys, nor cast down by the sorrows of earth. If, with such a temper, the Christian be in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity, possessing natural sensibilities, he may weep. But knowing that all his troubles and adversities will soon end in the tomb, he weeps as though he wept not. Does the sun of prosperity shine upon his path? He rejoices as he should, and gives thanks to the Author of every

good and perfect gift. But being duly sensible of the transitory and changing nature of all earthly things—knowing that the clearest morning sky may be overcast with clouds long before the noon, he tempers all his earthly joys with godly fear. This is the noble temper with which the apostle designed to inspire his brethren at Corinth—a kind of independence of all temporal things.—Not despising the good things of the world, but putting a due estimate upon them, using them in their proper place—not seeking happiness in them, but in the only living and true God. This is the temper that becomes us as dying men diligently to cultivate. With our hearts thus aloof from earth, our conversation in heaven, when the time of our departure is at hand, we shall be kept in perfect peace, and enabled to pass through the valley and shadow of death, fearing no evil. We may then in the triumphant language of St. Paul, exclaim—“*I have*

*fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.*"<sup>1</sup> But on the other hand, if we suffer our minds to linger here with fond attachment to the things of earth, we shall be lifted up by its joys, and thrown down by its sorrows; and when we are called to die, having devoted all our attention to the things of time, the soul will be forced away into eternity, with a weight of unrepented sins that must inevitably sink it into endless perdition. For, "*except a man be born of water and of the Spirit,*" our Lord declares that "*he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*"<sup>2</sup> He can neither be admitted into the kingdom of grace here, nor participate in the ineffable glories of his kingdom hereafter. As it is not in man to desire

<sup>1</sup> 2d Tim. iv., 7, 8.

<sup>2</sup> St. Jno. iii., 5.

misery—all would like at last, after they have shook off this mortal coil, to escape the damnation of hell, and enter upon an endless career of happiness in heaven. But this cannot be, there must be a previous fitness, a preparation in order to participate in the happiness of the saints in light. Otherwise, heaven itself would be a hell. The imperfect happiness that falls to the lot of mortals here on earth, flows from congeniality of mind, sentiment and affection. And the same law prevails among the society of the blessed. The inhabitants of that glorious region are all holy—they have one common centre of attraction—they all harmonize in adoring, worshipping, and praising Him who is God over all blessed forever. Place an unholy being in sight of the tree of life that is in the midst of the Paradise of God, and of those fountains of living waters to which the redeemed of the Lord are led, and let him hear that great multitude which no man can

number, and all the angels that burn around the throne, let him hear them in full chorus sing: — “Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever ;” so far would he be from participating in the general joy, that his misery would be increased. He would turn away with a look of malignant envy and deep despair, exclaiming—

“ Which way I fly is hell,  
Myself am hell.”

The hope therefore that may be entertained by the ungodly, of finally sharing in the blessedness of heaven, is sure to meet with an awfully sad disappointment. *“ If we sow to the flesh, we shall of the flesh reap corruption, but if we sow to the Spirit, we shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”* And this work of sowing to the Spirit, must be attended to in the proper season. You have a day in which you may labour with success. But it is only a day—a day swiftly passing away. O why should

we be grovelling here, seeing that we shall so soon be called away to try the realities of the eternal world? Does it not become us to be up and doing the work of our soul's salvation while it is called, *to day*? This is the great lesson that a mysterious Providence is enforcing upon us by the awful plague\* that is now sweeping off the race by hundreds, both in this and in other countries. God now impressively calls upon men "to consider their ways," "to do justly, love mercy, and to walk humbly before him." Short-sighted indeed must he be who has failed to observe the growing disposition to cast off the fear of God, the wholesome restraints of religion, to profane the Lord's day—to lessen the influence of churches and ministers, and all sacred institutions. Indeed, even children are now much wiser than their parents, guardians and teachers, in their own estimation. Many of these young wiseacres, have yet to learn the

\* The Cholera.

rudiments of moral science. They may, notwithstanding, be seen with all the pompous air of assumed independence, uniting in the mad cry,—“*down with churches, down with the ministry.*” And this spirit is doing its legitimate work of devastation and ruin. A large contribution for a ball, club supper, or some other demoralizing amusement, can be raised with ten-fold more ease, than even a paltry penny collection to sustain a church, or Sabbath school institution. We speak now with general reference. We believe it to be universally true, that there is a growing disregard among men to all that is godly, holy and good. Men are growing wiser, but not better. They are making wonderful improvements in the arts and sciences. But their minds are evidently blinded more and more by the god of this world, who leads them captive at his will. In view of such a state of things, is it any wonder that we behold God’s judgments abroad in the

earth—"the pestilence walking in darkness and destroying" its victims "at noonday." For his usual method has been, that when his appointed agencies have failed to reclaim men from the error of their ways, he has uniformly put forth the fearful arm of vengeance. Let us be wise, and improve the awful visitation inflicted upon us, by sincere repentance; by cultivating works of piety and love; beseeching him to turn away his anger, that we perish not. And, "*what thy hand findeth to do,*" on this subject, "*do it with thy might, for there is no work*" to be done in this matter, "*no device,*" no scheme to be devised for your salvation, "*no knowledge*" of this to be obtained "*in the grave,*" of which we are now so frequently reminded, by the mourners daily walking the streets, carrying man to his long home. I beseech you, therefore, to attend to the things that belong to your peace, now while you may, lest they be forever hid from your eyes.





## S E R M O N I X .

### ADMONITION TO REDEEM THE TIME.

“REDEEMING THE TIME BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL.”

Eph. v. 16.

THE benevolent Author of our existence, has allotted us a portion of time, in order that we may attend to the various duties that devolve upon us in our several stations in life, and to prepare by sober, righteous and godly living, for the solemn concerns of death and eternity. And when we are brought seriously to reflect upon the very short space that is granted to us individually, and the great and important work that must be done to secure our everlasting happiness, and escape the wrath to come, together with the many difficulties and dangers to which we are

perpetually exposed : when we thus reflect, *time* assumes an importance with which it would be well to have our minds at all times duly impressed. It was in this point of view, its relation to the eternal world, that caused the apostle so earnestly to exhort Christians, in the language of the text, to *Redeem the time*. He regards it as a most precious gem that should be, so to speak, bought up, and never suffered to be lost, thrown away, or wasted in idleness, sloth, vicious practices and pursuits; but to be redeemed out of their hands, and employed in that way which is consistent with the dictates of an enlightened conscience, and the revealed word of God. To redeem the time, therefore, is not to recall hours that are past and gone. This is impossible. But it is to employ the present in that manner that will promote our own true peace, the welfare of those around us, and thus secure the approbation of our Creator.

We should redeem the time.

1. From idleness. An idler, one who has no regular employment either for his head or hands, is one of the most miserable and contemptible creatures that society can possibly be infested with. Such an one is not only a misery to himself, but exerts also a most pernicious influence upon all with whom he associates. God created man with active energies; and he evidently designed that he should put them forth to some good purpose, in whatever state of life he may be providentially placed. Active industry is as much a religious duty, as it is indispensable to our temporal comforts. "*Be not slothful in business,*" says the inspired apostle, but "*fervent inspir it, serving the Lord.*"<sup>1</sup> In thus uniting lawful industry, *with fervency of spirit, serving the Lord*, he evidently designed to give it a sacred character. The reason why active indus-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. xii., 11.

try may be regarded in close contact with religion, is, that a habit of diligence is thereby cultivated, which is indispensable to true religion. Moral virtue and religion are sure to suffer wherever idleness prevails. It is an enemy to all good, and the nursery of every evil and vicious principle and practice. An idler, therefore, should be shunned, as you would the plague or pestilence. These remarks may not apply to any one present: each one may readily point to his daily avocation as a just refutation of the charge of idleness, so far as temporary matters are concerned. This is all very well in its place, we are every way disposed to award to you all the credit that is due to an attentive regard to daily business. But there is such a thing as idleness in another direction in which you may not so easily ward off the conviction of your guilt. We are compound beings, possessed of an immaterial, as well as a material and mortal nature. And the same great Eter-

nal who has made it obligatory upon us to be active and industrious in view of the temporal comforts of the body; has also made it our solemn and imperative duty, to be diligent, actively engaged with reference to the soul, upon which he has stamped his own image of immortality. What are you doing in this direction? What efforts are you putting forth to “*enter in at the straight gate;*”—“*to lay hold on eternal life,*”—to have God for your reconciled friend and father, and your names written in the Lamb’s book of life? Ah! you cannot nullify the charge of idleness here. You are compelled to acknowledge in your own minds that the charge is fully sustained in your case. You are aware of having suffered many hours to pass away, so far from having been employed to any good purpose, that they may be considered as total blanks in your existence. Your golden moments have flown swiftly by, and you have looked on with as much thought-

lessness and indifference, as if your Creator had sent you into the world for no other purpose than to sit down and quietly repose in a state of spiritual stupor and inactivity—doing nothing in reference to your own salvation, or the salvation of others. Our days may be suffered to pass away as if they were of no account; but it will be seen in a coming day, that time wasted and unimproved was noticed by Him with whom we have to do. It will be seen to your terror and dismay, unless averted by timely repentance, that every vacant hour will be so many witnesses rising up around you in the day of judgment, to condemn you. Your fate will be similar to the unprofitable servant who hid his talent in the earth. Time is a most precious talent granted us to be employed to the honor and glory of God; but spiritual idlers bury this inestimable jewel in the grave of their “earthly, sensual and devilish” pursuits and practices. What else have they any ground to expect,

but to have the awful commission executed upon them.—“*Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping, and gnashing of teeth.*”<sup>1</sup>

We ought to redeem time.

2. From vain and vicious pleasures. Man has found out a variety of ways to amuse his fancy, and give pleasure to his corrupt taste. And to gratify himself in this respect, he scarcely begins to calculate the cost. His estimate of the pleasures of the world is so high, that the cost of participation is scarcely thought of. To witness a theatrical performance, to participate in a ball, or some other convivial party, his hand readily opens, and his means are freely expended; but to contribute to the cause of God, religion and humanity, it is done, if done at all, with a mean, parsimonious and grudging spirit. All this clearly shows how strong

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv., 30.



a hold transitory pleasures have in the affections, excluding therefrom all that is truly good, holy and divine. But what after all is the character of these pleasures upon which there is such a high estimate placed? They are all vain and empty as a bubble on the wave. They are like a dream which assumes all the appearance of reality, till we awake from our slumber and discover the deception.

They leave no trace upon the mind that can be dwelt upon with real satisfaction, like that which follows a virtuous and religious course. On the contrary, the pursuit of the vanities of life, is not only time lost, but it is sure to bring in its train that bitter remorse, and those keen upbraidings, which foreshadow to the guilty mind, the wrath to come. O ye lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, you who are even now indulging glowing anticipations of worldly joys, hear the impressive voice of inspiration and ponder your steps. *“Rejoice, O young man in*

*thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.*"<sup>1</sup> How will you then answer for so much of your misspent time in unsatisfying and vicious pleasures? Will you say in the presence of Jesus, who left us an example that we might follow his steps, will you say in his presence, that you considered them innocent amusements? O be wise, and *redeem the time* by employing your precious moments, not in hewing out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water; but in seeking substantial pleasures; that flow from an evidence of your acceptance with God, and your adoption into the family of heaven.

Much time may be redeemed.

3. From unprofitable conversation.

<sup>1</sup> Ecc. xi. 9.

Man is a social being, and may therefore derive much improvement, both in an intellectual and moral point of view, by a free interchange of sentiments and opinions upon a proper subject, with his associates and friends. The mere suggestion of another who has viewed the subject in a different light from ourselves, may in a moment free the mind from some difficulty that might take days and weeks of private investigation to remove. Besides, there is a refined pleasure attending this mutual flow of thought. A person travelling a journey in pursuit of something valuable, may enjoy a good degree of pleasure by anticipating the object of his desire, but how is his joy increased, when accompanied on the road by associates of congenial minds. It is thus with a circle of friends when they convene together, and employ their time in the reciprocal interchange of thought upon a suitable theme. But when persons meet together and pass away the

time in worse than idle talk, circulating tales of slander, whispering, backbiting, and speaking evil of their fellow-men, this is killing time. And how many even among the professed followers of Christ, too often squander away their precious moments in this way. When they are found together, instead of adhering to the Apostolic injunction, aiming by their conversation, “*to edify, to minister grace*” to those present, there is too often a disposition manifested to inflict an injury upon the absent, forgetting that for “*every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.*”<sup>1</sup>

As candidates for eternity, we should also *redeem* the time.

4. From Worldly business. Diligent attention to the lawful business of life, is unquestionably a duty indispensable. “*If*

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xii., 36.

*any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he is worse than an infidel.*"<sup>1</sup> But, we are not to infer from this inspired declaration, the liberty of being *absorbed* in worldly business. The most devoted business man is careful to redeem sufficient time to partake of his daily food. And should there be no time specially devoted to attaining the bread that came down from heaven? Shall the body only be nourished, while the soul, the deathless part, is suffered to perish for lack of that spiritual meat that endureth to everlasting life? What excuse will be given by you when called to give a strict account of your stewardship at the awful tribunal of the Judge? Will you say that business was so urgent that you could not spare any time for purely religious purposes? Such a frivolous excuse may hush the voice of conscience now, but it will not answer in the great day of the Lord. David was

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. v., 8.

exalted to the throne, and had the cares and perplexities pertaining to the charge of a kingdom; yet he, with a host of other ancient worthies, will put you to silence. They all, without exception, had stated hours to retire from the noise and bustle of secular business, to commune with God and their own hearts. "*Evening, and morning, and at noon,*" says the Psalmist, "*will I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.*"<sup>1</sup> There are many who, so far from cultivating piety during the week, are found daringly to encroach upon the day consecrated to holiness and God—the *day* on which the Prince of life and glory triumphed over death, "ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them"—this day is devoted by many to calculations of the loss and gain of business! O, what deep depravity, what shocking ingratitude is

<sup>1</sup> Psa. lv., 17

this! It is from these and other practices that might be specified, we are exhorted in the text, to *redeem the time*. The important duty is urged upon us by the following powerful motive: "*because the days are evil.*"

The evil days spoken of were those in which sin and wickedness prevailed to an alarming extent, especially among the Gentile nations of the earth. They were famous for their literature and knowledge of the arts and sciences of civilization, but they were nevertheless, sunk into the lowest depths of superstition and moral debasement. This he uses as an argument to his Christian brethren, why they should "*walk circumspectly, redeeming the time,*" lest they become corrupted by the pernicious errors and practices that then prevailed. Does not a similar state of things exist in the present day? It is true that the impressive sound of the church-bell regularly bids the people to

enter the courts of the Lord's house, "to hear his most holy word, to set forth his most worthy praise, and to ask those things which are requisite and necessary as well for the body, as the soul." The heralds of the cross in every direction continue to beseech their fellow-men to be reconciled to God. Sabbath schools are in operation, directing the young in the way they should go. Tracts and other religious periodicals are scattered broad-cast over the country; yet, maugre all the efforts that are made for the reformation of man, does not sin, with his brazen front, still stalk abroad in the land, leaving misery, ruin, and desolation in his track? How many may we see on the Lord's day, instead of being in the house of God where prayer is wont to be made, either standing at the corners of the streets, riding about, or sailing on pleasure excursions, or assembled together in some genteel groggery!! Is not the list of the intemperate, of gamblers and



infidels, fearfully increasing? Acts of high-handed robbery, injustice, cruelty, murder and the like, are now of such frequent occurrence, that they cease to affect us. St. John the divine informs us that he "*heard a loud voice, saying, Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.*"<sup>1</sup> We do not say, that this prophecy refers to the present state of the world, but we may say, that the prevailing wickedness of the present time, shows that it is not altogether inapplicable. And is there no danger of being contaminated in the midst of so much wickedness? Is it not as true now as ever, that, "Evil communications corrupt good manners?" Have we not had deplorable instances within our own immediate observation, of the increase of crime and wretchedness? Do we not see some young men, who, a

<sup>1</sup> Rev. xii., 12.

few days ago gave fair promise of a course of honor and usefulness, falling victims to the vice of intemperance? Where is that beautiful and interesting array of young men which was seen with sober mien and orderly deportment, engaged either in the Sabbath school, or taking part in the surpassingly beautiful and sublime services of our church? A few, we rejoice to say, are still to be found at their post. But where does the Sabbath find too many of them now? In the path, which if not speedily retraced, will inevitably lead to shame, disgrace, and ruin in this world, and everlasting punishment in the world to come. This is an ensnaring world—the moral atmosphere by which we are surrounded is charged with death. And if we would avoid being fatally infected, we must *redeem* the time, we must improve it by daily seeking that divine aid which will enable us to resist with success, the many temptations that beset our path; other-

wise, you will be carried down the stream of this world's delights, and be finally lost in the gulf of endless woe.

2. By *evil days* the apostle had reference to the days of persecution. When he wrote the epistle in which the text is found, he was imprisoned at Rome, then the seat of learning, and the metropolis of the world, for the testimony he bore to the despised doctrines of the cross. In this view his argument may run thus:—*the days are evil.*—You are daily liable to be dragged to a loathsome prison, thence to the place of execution, therefore, I exhort you, to “*walk circumspectly,*” correctly, “*not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time.*”

We may not consider our lives to be in danger from the spirit of persecution. We are permitted to sit under our own vine and fig-tree, none daring to molest us. But are we secure against the attack of some of the multiplied diseases and

disasters which daily carry our fellow-creatures to the grave? Are you certain of living another week, another day, nay, another hour? Do you not see some as young, healthy and gay as yourselves, fade away under the blightings of disease, and finally fall like the leaves of autumn? Have you made a league with death that it shall not come nigh you? Were you not included in the sentence,—“*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return?*” Ah! it cannot be long before the solemnly impressive words in our burial service will be pronounced over every one of us now in divine presence: “earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust.” Oh, does it become man, mortal man, critically situated as he is, passing swiftly through time to the eternal world, where his destiny will be unalterably fixed in a state of happiness or misery, depending upon the character formed in this probationary state; I say, does it become him in such circumstances, to be squandering his time

in the vain pleasures and vicious practices of the world? Should he not, on the contrary, regard every flying moment as precious, and be diligent in “working out his own salvation with fear and trembling, while God worketh in him both to will and do his good pleasure?” This course your own conscience approves, and the word of God enjoins. Let the time past suffice wherein you have wrought folly. Resolve now that in the strength of divine grace, you will no longer live unto yourselves, but unto Him who died for you and rose again. And may He, “of whose only gift it cometh that” we can do unto him “true and laudable service, grant, that you may so faithfully serve him in this life, that you fail not finally to attain his heavenly promises through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour.”—Amen.

## SERMON X.

### THE WISDOM OF DULY CONSIDERING THE LATTER END.

“OH THAT THEY WERE WISE, THAT THEY UNDERSTOOD  
THIS, THAT THEY WOULD CONSIDER THEIR LATTER END.”

Deut. xxxiii., 29.

It is a serious thought, not always easy to thrust aside, that every thing pertaining to this life must come to an end, how soon none can tell. This is a secret veiled in the bosom of the great Eternal. The solemn truth we cannot evade; the conviction is deep in our minds, that all things which now delight the eye, gratify the taste, dazzle and delude the giddy, and which excite the ambition of a vain multitude, *all* shall have an end. The stars themselves shall fade, the sun grow

din with age, the earth shall wax old as doth a garment, and be changed: and man, its honored inhabitant, involved in the same destiny, like the flowers of the field, shall fade, wither, and, finally die. Every thing around, about, and within us is calculated to prompt us to the important duty; “*so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*” The setting sun closing his golden eye in the west—the faded leaf falling to the earth—the majestic river flowing on gradually until finally lost in the bosom of the ocean—the daily spectacle of “man going to his long home, and the mourners walking along the streets,” *all* are so many monitors of Providence, reminding us of the solemn change we individually must shortly make. But notwithstanding the instructive lessons that pour in upon us from these and other sources, like the Israelites to whom the text primarily refers, the great majority of mankind will not be *wise*: more stupid than the ox, they

will not *understand*, they will not “*consider their latter end.*” Happy for you, my brethren, did you all form an exception—*happy*, were you free from the charge of a criminal thoughtlessness upon this all important subject. But you are not so devoid of candor as to present your claim to innocence on this point. Well do you know, and often have you felt the application of the text in your own case; often have you heard the still, but powerful voice within, exclaiming,—“*Oh, that you were wise, that you understood this, that you would consider your latter end!*”

The two following propositions, will form the foundation of the remarks that we shall offer for your consideration.

1st. A due consideration of our latter end, is the part of true wisdom.

2d. The unwillingness of men to be wise in those things which involve their highest interest, affords matter for deep lamentation.



1. Duly to consider our end is not occasionally to bestow some thought upon the subject. This we cannot avoid if we would. Thoughts of death, will now and then, of their own accord, flit across the mind of every man. He is compelled, by the law of his nature, which, while it leads him to look forward to other future events, constrains him to give some thoughts to the subject of his mortality. But such a consideration as this, does not constitute true wisdom. A due consideration of any subject, is to give it that practical attention which its importance demands. If our end consisted in the total annihilation of both soul and body; were we destined to be remanded back to nothing; then, the proper consideration of our end would lead us to confine our thoughts chiefly to this world. The dictates of wisdom would be for us to make the best we could of our ephemeral existence—"to eat, drink, and be merry." But annihilation is not our destiny.

“ A voice within us speaks the startling word,  
Man, thou shalt never die. Celestial voices  
Hymn it around our souls.”

There will only be a temporary separation of parts—the spiritual from the material. The body will moulder away to its original elements and remain in that condition until animated and reconstructed again by the voice of the Arch-Angel and the trump of God. The soul, not subject to dissolution and decay, will be conveyed to the Paradise of God, there to await in joyful anticipation, the consummation of its bliss, reunited to the body, in God's eternal and everlasting kingdom : or else be “ driven away in its wickedness,” to participate in the horrors of those condemned spirits that are “ reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day :” depending upon the character formed in this probationary state. It is unnecessary to cite the Scripture passages that contain the truths here advanced. Your perfect fami-

liarity with them, we take for granted. Seeing then, that in the "latter end" of man, his happiness or misery will be unalterably fixed forever, a due consideration of it, would unquestionably lead him to prepare to avoid the one and enjoy the other. And here the great question arises, how can sinful man be thus prepared? How can he who has transgressed the laws of his Maker, and rendered himself obnoxious to his sore displeasure, become reconciled to him, restored to his favor and image here, and be advanced to honor, dignity, glory, and endless happiness hereafter? There is a way, and but one way; viz., "the new and living way opened up for us by the blood of Jesus." Reason debased, for centuries tried, but in vain, to find, the sure, the narrow way, that leads to glory and immortality. But it pleased God in infinite benevolence, to devise the plan by which "He can be just and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, with a heart unto righteous-

ness.” “*God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”<sup>1</sup> We may clothe ourselves in the garment of self-righteousness, we may felicitate ourselves on the ground of our own goodness, and be esteemed by a short-sighted world as the best of citizens, but this will be found at last to be a poor preparation for an exit from time to eternity. With no other preparation than our own righteousness, we shall be like the man, spoken of in the Gospel, who built his house upon the sand, “When the rains descended and the flood came and beat upon his house, it fell and great was the fall.”

Nothing can be more absurd than the idea of man attempting to recommend himself to the favor of God by his own fancied goodness. He has often violated the law of God which denounces death upon the transgressor; yet, he attempts

<sup>1</sup> St. Jno. iii., 16.

to gain the favor of God by his outward observance of it, seeking to be *justified* by the law, that *condemns* him as a transgressor, and continually cries:—"Pay that thou owest"—settle up for your past follies. Let us suppose that you are now blameless so far as may relate to your outward deportment. What is to be done with the follies and vanities of youth? What amends can you make for your past thoughtless indifference, and criminal negligence of God and of his claims upon your undivided service? You must remember, that his law requires a line of perfect, unflinching obedience from the time of our accountability to the end of life. Its terms are rigid. Its language is:—"Do this and live." "*The soul that sinneth it shall die.*" Ah, self-righteous man, you are in a dilemma. You must either enter and make good your plea at the bar of your judge, of perfect obedience on your part, or humbly fall at the footstool of mercy, sue for pardon, and plead

the perfect obedience, and vicarious death of another, viz., the Lord Jesus Christ. To perfect obedience to the law, you can lay no claim. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." None can "tell how oft he offendeth." To be justified by the deeds of the law, therefore, is impossible. The great provision made in the gospel, is the only hope of sinful man. If then we would be prepared to meet death in perfect peace, we must be "found in Christ, not having our own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." The promise of eternal blessedness is to those only, who are thus united to Christ, by that faith "which works by love, purifies the heart and overcomes the world;" who have been raised from a death of sin, unto a new birth unto righteousness, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and are walking as those who are alive from the dead. The persons who answer this de-

scription have been graciously brought to understand, and duly consider their latter end. They have availed themselves of God's plan of reconciliation. Hence, they are truly wise. That man would be considered wise, who in having to travel over a trackless desert infested by ravenous beasts, first provided himself with proper guards, and other necessaries proper to render his journey both safe and comfortable. In our pilgrimage through mortality, many dangers beset our path, from the world, the flesh and Satan. Is he not eminently wise, who has chosen the Lord for his portion, his strong tower and defence? Such an one need not fear any evil tidings, his heart may be fixed, trusting in the arm of the Lord. That man, who, before rearing his superstructure, first secures a foundation of sufficient strength to bear its weight, may be considered wise; but how much more so should he be considered, who rears his hopes of heaven and eternal happiness

upon the Rock of Ages, the sure and immutable foundation which God himself has laid in Zion. He who provides in spring and summer against the cold and chilling winds of winter is wise: but how much more so is the man who provides for his solid comfort against the cold blasts of death by securing a shelter under the everlasting arm? Such an one judges rightly in that which should concern him most; in that which involves his highest and best interests; hence he is pre-eminently wise. He regards himself only as a pilgrim, a sojourner here. He sets his affections, not on things below, but on things above. His conversation is in Heaven. He puts a proper estimate upon the things of this life. He uses the world, as not abusing it. He passes through things temporal so as not to lose those things that are eternal. He reasons thus.—The things that are seen, are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. What then would it profit



me were I to gain the whole world and finally lose my soul? Were all its wealth and honor and glory mine, I could keep them only a few days. But if I lose my soul, it is not lost for a limited time, but lost forever. Seeing that his immortal spirit outweighs the world with all its magnificence and all its glory, he wisely "counts all things but dung and loss, that he might win Christ, and be found of him in peace." But how little of this heavenly wisdom is to be found in the world? If we contemplate man as an inhabitant of this earth, without reference to eternity, and consider his great and wonderful achievements in the arts and sciences, we are forced to acknowledge his eminent wisdom. But when we regard him as a candidate for eternity, what a falling off is here. How blind, how grossly ignorant is he in his spiritual and eternal concerns! And it is not because of the impossibility of his displaying the same wisdom in this

direction as in the other, but solely because he *will* not—he *will not* be wise.

The Scriptures represent man's unwillingness to accept the offers of mercy as made to him in the gospel, as the chief cause of his final ruin. "*Ye will not come to me,*" says Jesus, "*that ye might have life.*"<sup>1</sup> "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.*"<sup>2</sup>

"*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: But ye have set at nought all my counsel and would none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh: when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind, when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I*

<sup>1</sup> St. Jno. v., 40.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xxiii., 37-38.

*will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore, shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.”*<sup>1</sup>

We pass on to consider.

II. The unwillingness of men to be wise in those things which involve their highest interest, affords matter for deep lamentation. To see a man dwelling close to a perennial spring of water, and yet with great labor and fatigue hewing out first one broken cistern, and then another, and after multiplied disappointments to die of thirst, could not fail to excite our pity for his consummate folly. In this, we have a faint picture of the conduct of men generally. The fountain of living waters, is within the reach of

<sup>1</sup> Prov. i., 24-31.

every man. He has an unconquerable thirst for happiness. But instead of seeking it where alone it can be found, he tries this, that and the other expedient, and though disappointed over and over again, he will not be wise; he dies eternally, he perishes for lack of those heavenly streams, which he might have received if he would, "without money and without price." The prodigal son, who strayed away from the paternal care of a kind parent, squandered his substance in riotous living, and reduced himself to a state of starvation and wretchedness, was truly an object to be pitied. But preeminently so are those who have strayed away from the wholesome restraints of their Heavenly Father. Unwilling to yield to the holy requisitions of his love, they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. See the multitudinous crowd of immortal men, wending their way in the "broad" road, led on by Satan, the god of this world. A portentous storm is gath-

ering not far in the distance. The day of God's wrath is at hand, and they are out in that dangerous and destructive path without a shelter, and in a filthy, ragged, and starving condition. Their Heavenly Father is willing to shelter them beneath his everlasting arm; to wash them in the blood of the everlasting covenant, to clothe them with the robe of righteousness; to feed them with the bread of heaven. He condescends to call after the wanderers in the language of paternal affection: "*My son, give me thy heart.*"<sup>1</sup> He expostulates with them, saying,— "*How long ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge?*"<sup>2</sup> "*Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.*"<sup>3</sup> But all these kind calls and tender expostulations are disregarded. The deluded souls continue

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xxiii., 26.    <sup>2</sup> Prov. i., 22.    <sup>3</sup> Isa. lv., 2.

to wander farther and farther from God. Still he cries after them: “*Turn you, turn you at my reproof.*” Some wander at such an awful distance, that the voice of mercy which once came home to them with power, now, dies away in whispers upon their obdurate hearts. They wander, until they “stumble” at last “upon the dark mountains,” and plunge headlong, into the whirlpool of endless perdition. This is the silly part acted by that being who is so prone to pride himself on the dignity of his nature. We would not cast any reflection upon his dignity; we would rather mourn over the strong indications he gives of a moral desolation. He presents a scene truly affecting. He is like a noble mansion in ruins. The grand and lofty columns, the fine exquisite workmanship, which are still seen, are striking evidences of former greatness: but the glory has departed. It is natural for us to linger in pensive melancholy, as we behold the remaining traces of depart-

ed grandeur. There is something enchanting in the sight, that keeps us fast bound to the spot. Our eyes are fixed upon the spectacle. We compare the past with the present, and the sad contrast affects the heart, and awakens the tenderest emotions. The unconscious tear stands trembling in the eye, as we behold the melancholy scene. But there is nothing so affecting, so much to be lamented, as the perverse obstinacy, and rebellious course of impenitent sinners. It was in view of this, that the Psalmist exclaimed: "*Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.*"<sup>1</sup> It was in view of this, that the blessed Jesus lingered about Jerusalem, and "*wept over it,*" saying, "*If thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*"<sup>2</sup> It was in view of this, that the great Jehovah himself, is represented as lamenting, in the terms expressed in our

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxix., 136.

<sup>2</sup> St. Luke xix., 41-42.

text,—“*O, that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!*”

Permit me now, my brethren, to urge you forward in the glorious pursuit of true wisdom. Of all other inquiries, let this be the all-absorbing one—What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? How may I ensure a blissful immortality when my flesh and my heart shall fail? Get wisdom, but with all your getting, get understanding. See to it, that you lay up a good foundation against the time to come. Ignorance here, is fatal. Better be a way-faring man and a fool in other matters, so that you be wise unto salvation, than to stand upon the loftiest pinnacle of earthly wisdom, and be ignorant in heavenly things. The advantages of earthly wisdom are confined to this world; but the wisdom which is from above, leads us besides “the still waters” of comfort in this world, and introduces into that glori-



ous region above, where is fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore. I entreat you then, above all things, to get this wisdom—the wisdom that includes a preparation against that hour, when the earth shall recede and disappear, and eternity with all her awful realities, shall break in upon your astonished sight. Prepare, by breaking off your sins, by righteousness and turning to the Lord, in full purpose of heart. Prepare, by obtaining an interest in the merits of Christ, who died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. He is your only hope. He is the only rod and staff that can comfort you when called to pass the valley and shadow of death. He is the “bright and morning star” that can light up your pathway from earth to heaven. Then be wise. Choose him for your portion. Take him for your “all in all.” Pass through things temporal, so as not to lose those things that are eternal; counting all things but loss, so that you may win Christ, and be found of him in peace.

## S E R M O N X I .

A SACRED NEARNESS TO GOD RECOMMENDED.

“DRAW NIGH TO GOD, AND HE WILL DRAW NIGH TO YOU.”

Gen. Epis. James iv., 8.

IN discoursing from the words of the text, we shall be led to consider,

FIRST,—The distant relation that fallen man sustains to his Maker.

SECOND,—The duty enjoined upon man to DRAW *nigh to God*.

THIRDLY,—The encouragement to the performance of this duty.—HE WILL DRAW NIGH TO YOU.

1. The distant relation that fallen man sustains to his Maker. The great God in his essential presence, is not far from any one of us. “He is about our bed, and

about our path, and spies out all our ways." He fills the great immensity of space, and is therefore, everywhere present at the same time. This truth, too large for either human or angelic minds fully to grasp, is set forth by the Psalmist in language the most lofty and sublime: "*Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven thou art there. If I make my bed in hell behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.*"<sup>1</sup> God is present to spy out all our thoughts, motives, intentions, dispositions, tempers and actions: He is present to know, sustain and uphold every minute part of his widely extended creation, whether animate or inanimate; aye, his presence extends far beyond the bounds of those innumerable worlds that roll in

<sup>1</sup> Psa. cxxxix., 7-10.

the wide expanse of heaven ; infinitely further than the imagination can possibly reach. But notwithstanding the great Eternal be thus everywhere present, and of course nigh unto all of us, yet, fallen man, nevertheless, stands at an awful distance from him. The Omnipresence of God is one of his natural attributes. It follows as a necessary consequence of his existence. It is just as impossible for the Creator not to be Omnipresent, as it is for him not to exist. And that the non-existence of the Deity is impossible, is clear from what strikes our senses in every direction. We see, for instance, a variety of living creatures on the earth, in the air, and in the waters. And we know that they could not create themselves ; they must depend upon some other cause for their existence ; and that cause must be absolutely independent ; for an eternal succession of dependent beings is impossible. There must be an end to the chain of secondary causes,

and that end, is the uncaused, uncreated God. Thus we see, that the non-existence of God is impossible. And that he should not be Omnipresent, is equally impossible. He being, as we have seen, uncreated; he must necessarily be absolutely independent; and the being who is absolutely independent, must be Omnipotent, must possess Almighty power, power to do everything that does not imply a contradiction. And he who has power thus to do everything, must be everywhere present; for we cannot conceive of power to do anything, where there is no agent to exert that power. But there are other attributes of the Deity spoken of in the Holy Scriptures denominated moral; such as his holiness, justice, goodness and truth. We need recite only a few passages that relate to God's moral excellency. "*Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like thee, glorious in holiness.*"<sup>1</sup> "*Thou*

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xv., 11.

*art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.”<sup>1</sup> “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”<sup>2</sup>*

Of his justice they thus speak. “*Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.*”<sup>3</sup> “*He is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice.*”<sup>4</sup> They are equally explicit in declaring his goodness and truth. “*The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.*”<sup>5</sup> Now it is the duty and high privilege of man to be conformed to the Divine nature in his moral excellence. But when we contemplate unregenerate man, either in the light of experience or revelation, we cannot fail to see the vast distance at which he stands from that moral likeness of God, which it is his privilege to bear. God is holy; he looks upon sin with infinite abhorrence. But

<sup>1</sup> Hab. i., 13.

<sup>2</sup> 1st Epis. Gen. Jno. i., 5.

<sup>3</sup> Psa. lxxxix., 14.

<sup>4</sup> Job xxxvii., 23.

<sup>5</sup> Ex. xxxiv., 6.

man is unholy; he is conceived and born in sin. Sinful thoughts, desires, affections and tempers, he freely indulges in, while sinful practices and pursuits are engaged in by him with delight. God is just; but man is unjust. He is unjust to himself, as he fails to bestow the attention that is due to the paramount interests of his spiritual nature. This being the case, he cannot be otherwise than unconcerned about the spiritual and eternal concerns of his fellow-creatures. He is unjust towards God, in withholding that reverential fear and devout service to which he has an indisputable claim. God is good. His goodness, like the bright sun in the heavens, shines along the pathway of every child of Adam that comes into the world. In all his works and ways, he evidently has a kind regard to the happiness of the creatures he has made. But unrenewed man is so far from bearing the moral likeness of his Maker in this respect, that, on the con-

trary, all his works and ways tend ultimately, not only to his own misery, but to the utter ruin also of all over whom he has influence. To use the strong language of scripture :—“ *Destruction and misery are in their ways,*” “ *and the way of peace have they not known.*”<sup>1</sup> We have thus given a brief sketch of the moral image of unrenewed man. And how unlike the moral likeness of his Maker? The one is Light, the other, darkness. Now so long as man maintains this position, so long as he stands in this opposing relation to his Maker, he cannot be happy. It is impossible. Where is there an intelligent creature in the wide universe, who can be happy, unless approbated by his Maker, the only source of happiness? And can the great Supreme, approbate a character, that is in direct opposition to his own? No, *never*. Light and darkness can amalgamate sooner than the Eternal God can look

<sup>1</sup> Rom. iii., 16–17.



with complacency, either upon man or angel, that does not, in his measure, bear his moral image and likeness. There is a perpetual war between the two. God has no fellowship with the wicked. And the wicked have no communion with him. "*The carnal mind is enmity against God.*" The final issue of this hostility, according to the sacred oracles, will be terrible in the extreme. They teach us that "the day cometh, when all the proud" contemners of God's law, "and all that do wickedly," shall, at the awful sentence of the Judge, "go away into everlasting punishment, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." Awfully tremendous is the doom that awaits the finally impenitent. But as our heavenly Father "hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his wickedness and live," he has in infinite kindness devised a plan by which he may escape that misery to which his native opposition to God will certainly

lead. There is no way, however, of escape for man, unless he alter his position, unless a radical change take place in his moral character. Hence the exhortation in the text—"DRAW NIGH TO GOD." As man's distance from the moral image of God is particularly alluded to, so to draw nigh to Him, is to advance progressively towards his divine image, and likeness. We draw nigh to God:—

1. By repentance. Repentance properly speaking comprehends three things, viz. : conviction of sin, sorrow on account of it, and the forsaking of it. The searching light of heaven first discloses to the sinner the sad reality that his "whole head is sick," and his "whole heart faint;" that, "from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores:" that "have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment." This view of native depravity, this conviction

of sin, is accompanied with a generous sorrow on account of it. "*I am weary,*" says penitent David, "*with my groaning ; all the night make I my bed to swim ; I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief.*"<sup>1</sup> This sorrow, however, is not merely a mental anguish arising from the fear of punishment, but a tender and filial grief for having sinned against the most endearing goodness, and offended the kindest and best of friends. No other consideration pierces the soul so deep and causes it to overflow with penitential sorrow, as the thought of its ingratitude and rebellion against Him who bought us with the Saviour's blood. He sums up all his guilt and crime in the penitent acknowledgement — "*Against thee, thee only have I sinned.*"<sup>2</sup> This conviction of and sorrow for sin, lead to the forsaking of it. The penitent, like the prodigal in the Gospel, forms the resolution to arise from his state of wretchedness, and he is

Psa. vi., 6-7.

<sup>2</sup> Psa. li., 4.

enabled through grace to put his resolution into practice: he arises, brings forth fruit meet for repentance, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well. "The vows that" he "made, or that was made in" his "name at" his "baptism," he ratifies and confirms, "acknowledging" himself "bound to believe and to do all those things which" he "then undertook, or" his "sponsors undertook for" him.

The soul has now so far changed its position, that whereas sin, in which it formerly took so much delight, now appears in all its native odiousness, as something to be loathed and shunned. He perceives also a beauty in the holiness of God which he never saw before, and his anxious desire is to be conformed in his measure, more and more to the same image. Hence he DRAWS NIGH TO GOD.

2. In the exercise of faith. Under the dispensation of the Gospel, God has appointed repentance and a lively faith

in his mercy through Christ, as the terms to be complied with on the part of man in order to his restoration to the divine favor. Hence the command: "REPENT YE AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL."<sup>1</sup> So, whenever a soul is suitably humbled under a sense of his sins, though he may see sufficient grounds for self-reproach for his former ingratitude, his unnatural and long continued rebellion against God, yet he goes to his heavenly Father with the determination to submit to his government, imploring and relying upon his mercy through Christ. We repeat, that he relies upon God's mercy through Christ. For we have no grounds to expect pardoning mercy at the hands of God in any other way than through faith in Jesus Christ. "*No man can come to me,*" says Jesus, "EXCEPT THE FATHER *which hath sent ME, DRAW HIM.*"<sup>2</sup> Again he says, "*Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*"<sup>3</sup> Here we learn that in the

<sup>1</sup> St. Mark i., 15. <sup>2</sup> Jno. vi., 44. <sup>3</sup> Jno vi, 37.

economy of grace God the Father draws man : he draws him by the cords of love, he sheds light into his mind, and discovers unto him his wretched condition ; he shows him the great provision his love has made for his salvation, he directs him to look to the Lamb he has appointed to take away the sins of the world. And whenever the penitent in obedience yields to this drawing, and centres all his hopes in Him who gave himself a ransom for all, then to such an one the promise in the text is verified. The Lord in his mercy draws nigh to that soul.

1. He draws nigh to impart a comfortable sense of pardon and reconciliation.

He sheds abroad in the believing heart a peace that the world cannot give ; a peace that passeth all understanding. “ *The Spirit itself,*” says St. Paul, “ *beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children*

*of God.*"<sup>1</sup> And being emancipated through grace, from the servile fear of wrath and condemnation, they are enabled to approach God as their Almighty friend and Father, from whose inexhaustible fulness they receive all that they need, both for time and eternity. God deals with them as children. He manifests himself unto them as he doth not unto the world, by imparting unto them light, life, strength, comfort and consolation, to aid them to walk in the path of holiness. Once they were strangers to communion with God, but now they know what it is to enjoy sweet fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. But as they are daily exposed to a very formidable opposition to their advancement in the divine life; an opposition from the world, the flesh and Satan, through whose influence they would inevitably fall if left to themselves, the Lord draws near,—

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii., 16.

2. To guide, direct and support them. At all times, and under all circumstances of trial, he is near, whispering in tones sweeter than heavenly music, saying unto them, "*Fear not ; be not dismayed, I am thy God, I will uphold thee, I will strengthen thee.*" Though they pass through the waters of affliction, he assures them that "they shall not be overflowed." And when they are called to "walk through the valley and shadow of death," he will be the rod and staff to comfort them, and will ultimately lead them to that eternal rest that remains for the people of God.

How thankful we should be, my brethren, for the great provision that is made for us in the gospel. We had by wicked works alienated ourselves from God, rendered ourselves obnoxious to his wrath and sore displeasure—"treasured up unto ourselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." But in his infinite benevolence he contrived a plan by which we may be



brought back, restored to his favor and image here, and finally exalted to everlasting happiness in the bright world above. Let those who have been graciously brought into a sacred nearness to God, show their thankfulness for this inestimable privilege, by making nearer approaches to him, by diligent attendance upon all the appointed means of grace—daily cultivating those graces of the Spirit which in the sight of God are of great price. “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day.” The nearer you approach to Him, the nearer will He be found to you, imparting more light to direct you in the way in which you should go; more strength to enable you to resist your spiritual foes; more comfort to animate you on your pilgrimage. Thus advancing in the divine life, being ambitious to comprehend with all saints, what is “the length and breadth, height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge,” you may hope

to have an ABUNDANT ENTRANCE into that kingdom where is fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

We would now address a few words, especially, to that part of our hearers who are far off from God by wicked works. My impenitent hearers, consider what a fearful position you occupy—enemies to the great God of the universe! You may be shocked at this, but it is nevertheless true. Every one now in Divine presence, who has arrived to the years of maturity, and is found in a state of impenitency, is an enemy to God. You are rebels against His government. You stand in battle array against him, led on by “the Prince of Darkness, he who now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience.” And, what do you suppose, will be the issue of this hostility? Canst thou, whose habitation is in the dust, contend with the arm of Omnipotence? Suppose the wrath of every individual in this community was aroused against you, would you

stand singly and alone, and contend against it? No. You would escape for your life; you would prefer a lodging in some vast wilderness. But what will you do when the Lord "*ariseth to shake terribly the earth?*" When *the great day of his wrath shall come*, whither shall you fly? "*Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him.*" Where now will you find shelter from that "*fire that shall devour before Him?*" Where in the wide universe will you then find an all-availing friend? Thank God, that we are yet prisoners of hope, that a Throne of Grace is erected, and that sinners may now obtain mercy and find grace to help them in their time of need. I beseech you, therefore, to improve these precious privileges, while as yet pardon may be obtained. Lay down the weapons of your rebellion, and fight against God no more. Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace. Draw nigh to Him, and He will draw nigh to you.

## SERMON XII

HAPPY END OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

“FOR DAVID AFTER HE HAD SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION BY THE WILL OF GOD, FELL ON SLEEP.”\*

Acts xiii.—36.

It requires but little reflection clearly to perceive, that the benevolent Author of our existence has sent us into the world to be active: active in the discharge of all those duties that conduce to our own individual happiness, and the happiness of those around and about us. The chain of mutual dependence that connects the one family of man together; the progressive improvement in moral and intellec-

\* Preached on occasion of the death of Rev. Peter Williams, rector of St. Philip's Church, New York city, Nov. 15th, 1840.

tual worth of which he is susceptible; the clear indications he gives of being an heir of immortality, destined to survive the globe he inhabits; all show, that he has been made an inhabitant of this world for quite different purposes than to sit down on the lap of ease, and be a mute spectator of what he beholds around him. "*I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day.*"<sup>1</sup> was the motto of our divine exemplar, while his dwelling was among the sons of men. True it is, that no mortal man, nor flaming seraph, was adequate to the great work which he, in amazing condescension, undertook to perform, and which he so triumphantly finished. But it is vain for any to bear His name, who is not actuated by the same principle of devotedness to God, that shone so conspicuously in His eventful life.

The life of the Christian is a state of service. He is in the condition of a

<sup>1</sup> John ix., 4.

servant, ordered with others into their Master's vineyard, to perform a certain amount of labor. They all have a day in which they may attend to the work allotted them. And, however, some may loiter away their time and neglect their work in defiance of the orders given, the Christian, as a good and faithful servant, is found diligently employed at the post assigned to him. Being duly impressed with the importance of what he has to do, and with the value of time allotted him, he "works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, while God worketh in him; both to will and to do of his good pleasure." He *labors* to have that "Kingdom" established in his heart that consisteth in "righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." The opposition he meets with in this work, affords him ground for greater diligence. The world, in all its fascinating and bewildering charms, is often presented, in order to divert his attention; the remains of

inward depravity often prove a source of much trouble and difficulty in the way of his progressive improvement; Satan, that invisible but powerful enemy, uses his various devices to harass, intimidate and dishearten. But maugre all this hostile and formidable array, he is enabled in the strength of Jesus to persevere in his course. He adds to his "*faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance: and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly-kindness; and to brotherly-kindness, charity.*"<sup>1</sup> The Christian, in order to be successful in securing his own personal salvation, finds that it requires continual watchfulness, prayer, self-denial and diligent attendance on all the appointed means of grace. But his efforts do not terminate on himself. "*He serves his generation.*" He "looks not on his own things," exclusively, "but also on the things of others."

<sup>1</sup> 2d Peter i., 5-6-7.

True religion expands the heart; it leads those who pay homage at her holy altar to devote a portion of their time and talents towards ameliorating the condition of their fellow-men. While it consists with paying special regard to our own personal happiness, or the happiness of those with whom we are connected by the ties of blood, conjugal relation or Christian fellowship, it cannot be confined within these narrow limits. Unrestricted by these ties, it extends its kind wishes and benevolent regards to the limits of the habitable globe. Its sincere and devout prayer is:—“Thy Kingdom come: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Nor does it rest in kind feelings towards mankind. It lends a helping hand to all those institutions whose object is to advance peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety throughout the earth. Under its expanding influence our hearts and hands will be open to supply the needy, and to



every species of distress we shall be disposed to give relief. Even towards our enemies, we shall not be satisfied with verbal expressions of kindness, but will be ready at the first opportunity to give our kindness a tangible form.

The rule by which the Christian is governed in his actions deserves our notice.

“He serves his generation by *the will* of God.” It is possible for a person to render very important services to the age in which he lives, without having any reference whatever to the will or commands of his Maker. He may give liberally to the poor and needy, he may exert his talents in diffusing correct notions on the subject of human rights; he may take a conspicuous part in all the great moral enterprises, which, like “the leaves of the tree of life, are for the healing of the nations,” and at the same time be actuated by no higher motive than self-

aggrandizement. "Verily," as our Saviour said of the Pharisees, "they have their reward." They may obtain the object of their pursuit—"the praise of men;" but the plaudit of Heaven they cannot hope to receive. For all works flowing from such motives, however extolled among men, are in the sight of God of no value. On the other hand, the true Christian is governed in his actions by a due regard to God. His will or word is the regulating principle in all his works and ways. In whatever station Divine Providence sees fit to place him, whether in a public or private—in whatever condition, whether rich or poor, high or low, he makes the will of God as contained in his word the rule by which he acts. This is ever a "lantern unto his feet and a light unto his path." What a wide contrast presents itself between the Pharisaical and the truly godly man. While vain-glory is the only incentive by which the former is moved, the latter is actuated.

by motives of piety to his Maker. Characters so essentially differing from each other, cannot fail to secure for themselves in the end widely different results. Fame and popular applause may be very soothing to the worldly mind in the day of health and manly vigor. But when the solemn hour of departing life arrives it vanishes, leaving the trembling spirit agitated under the most fearful and awful apprehensions of a judgment to come. But the faithful servants of the Most High, 'after' having "served their generation" 'by,' or according to, "*the will of God,*" are said to "*fall asleep.*" This is a figurative expression which is often used in Scripture to signify the peaceful and happy termination of the Christian's mortal life. Their death is represented under the idea of sleep.

1. On account of the sweet calm and composure in which they depart this life. The approach of death excites no terror in the bosom of the Christian, because he has the Lord Jehovah for his everlasting

strength. It matters not under what circumstances he comes, whether at midnight or in the morning; whether in a slow measured pace, or as quick as the lightning's flash, he walks "through the valley and shadow of death," calm and collected, fearing "no evil," for the "rod and staff" of his divine Master afford him unspeakable "comfort." "*The sting of death*" being extracted, he is enabled in grateful adoration to exclaim: "*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*"<sup>1</sup> Death to the pious may with great propriety be represented under the idea of sleep.

2. Because they then rest from all the toils and cares inseparable from this probationary state. As when evening comes on the labourer takes his rest, and forgets the toils of the day when he lies down to sleep, so at death, the faithful servant of God finishes his course of service, retires

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xv., 57.

from the field of labor, and then goes to his rest in the Paradise of God. There, he joyfully waits in anticipation of that “*crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give at that day, unto all them that love his appearing.*”<sup>1</sup> The disembodied spirit in the heavenly world, unquestionably, enjoys all the happiness that it is capable of in its separate state. But, its full and perfect fruition cannot be realized until “Christ shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” Then, and not till then, shall the whole company of the redeemed exult in “*the saying brought to pass;*” that, “*Death is swallowed up in victory.*”<sup>2</sup> This leads us to consider.

3. Another reason why the pious may be said to ‘*fall asleep*’ in death.—Their bodies shall then be raised to a glorious immortality. Revelation teaches that at the final catastrophe of the world, man-

<sup>1</sup> 2d Tim. iv., 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. xv., 54.

kind universally shall be aroused from their long slumbers, and be made to start into life. But so broad will be the line of distinction drawn, that the renewed cheerfulness and vigor that follow rest, cannot apply to all. "*Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*"<sup>1</sup> "*The hour is coming,*" said our Lord, "*in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ;*"—but mark the distinction ; "*they that have done good unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.*"<sup>2</sup> The bodies of the saints shall be formed and fashioned like the glorified body of Christ : made capable of enjoying in union with the soul, and bearing up under, that, "*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" Oh ! how full of comfort is this consideration to the believer. While he, with a sorrowing

<sup>1</sup> Dan. xii., 2.

<sup>2</sup> John v., 28-29.

heart, deposits in the grave a departed friend who died in the Lord, he may look forward with a lively hope to the resurrection morning, when the vast empire of death shall be utterly abolished; when the bodies of the saints shall arise all-glorious and immortal. Then, these earthly tabernacles will no longer be clogs to the soul in her devotional exercises; but happy instruments and assistants in all the exalted services of the Church triumphant above.

But, on the other hand, the wicked, being "*vessels of wrath fitted to destruction,*" will be raised with bodies built upon indestructible materials, only to be made capable of enduring in union with the soul, that "horrible tempest" of wrath, which is to be their portion forever and ever. Oh, who does not wish to escape this tremendous doom of the finally impenitent, and to share in the ineffable glories that are in reserve for the godly. Baalam exclaimed: "Let me die the

death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"<sup>1</sup> But how vain was such a wish unaccompanied with the necessary qualifications. However strong the desire of the ungodly may be to die the death of the righteous and to have a glorious end like theirs, it can never be realized. The only way to this, is to live the self-denying and pious life of the righteous. We must here like them be raised from a death of sin unto a life of righteousness by the power of the Holy Spirit. And being thus quickened to life, we must walk "as those that are alive from the dead: *seeking for glory, honor and immortality, by a patient continuance in well-doing: being careful to maintain good works, that are good and profitable unto men.*" A firm foundation of peace and comfort at the closing scene of life is laid, only, after we have thus *served our generation by the will of God.* Such was the character and end of our late friend

<sup>1</sup> Num. xxiii., 10.



and brother, the Rev. Peter Williams; called away suddenly to us, but not, to him, from the field of toil and labor, to rest in Abraham's bosom. Our departed friend was brought under the influence of saving grace in the most favorable season of life. He gave heed to the admonition: "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.*"<sup>1</sup> Blessed as he had been with the advantage of pious parents, he very probably traced his early religious impressions to their godly admonitions and counsels. The time however came that must come to all, when the sacred tie that bound the hearts of parents and child together, had to be severed by death. He was left behind to mourn the loss of them for awhile; but with what raptures must they have hailed each other as they met again on the borders of the heavenly world, to part no more for-

<sup>1</sup> Ecc. xii., 1.

ever. At the age of seventeen or eighteen years, he became a communicant member of the Episcopal church of which Dr. Lisle was pastor. Soon after, he assisted an aged gentleman, whose name was Thomas McKoom, in giving catechetical instruction to the children assembled in a private room rented for that purpose. In the same place a number of adults regularly met on Sunday evenings for religious purposes. The exercises were generally conducted by Mr. McKoom. After the death of this gentleman, Mr. Williams was regularly appointed lay-reader. He acted in that capacity until the year 1820, at which time he was ordained deacon by Bishop Hobart in the church in which he dispensed the word of life to the close of his earthly pilgrimage. He was ordained priest by the same Bishop in the year 1826. He manifested a deep concern for the improvement not only of the people of his charge, but for his brethren generally. Hence he was found contributing

his influence and pecuniary means towards supporting the various organized instrumentalities that had a tendency to elevate and improve the condition and character of his oppressed people. I doubt very much, whether there exists in the city of New York one single society having an immediate bearing on the general interests of our people, but what met with his countenance and support. He was not conspicuous in these matters. For no man, perhaps, was less given to display, or aimed less at popular applause than he. If he could hide himself from personal gaze, he seemed to be best pleased. His whole deportment seemed to say:—

“ Let me be little and unknown,  
Lov’d and priz’d by God alone.”

A retiring modesty and unaffected diffidence formed a very prominent feature in his character. His hopes for an improvement in the character of our people were in the young and rising generation,

in whom he manifested a lively interest. Did he see a promising youth, who lacked nothing but the necessary advantages to enable him to reflect credit on himself and people in a moral and intellectual point of view; he was the man that would spare no pains to get such an one in a situation favorable to the development of his powers. He took delight in seeking out such cases. There is now a high school in the city of New York that owes its establishment chiefly to his untiring efforts.

He was a universal friend. His countenance, which was expressive of kind and benevolent feelings, added to that ease and gentleness which were ever seen in his manners, told every one that approached him, that he was in the presence of a friend. He loved every one, hence he was universally beloved in return. To use the language of one with whom he had long been most intimate:—"he was a friend to every body—he was

always in trouble about other people's troubles. He was a kind of depository for every one to lodge his cares and anxieties. People of different denominations, whenever they got in difficulty, would invariably go to him; and he, in the kindness of his heart, would as often use his endeavors to have their affairs satisfactorily settled."

As it regards his fidelity and zeal in the discharge of his ministerial duties, I need only quote the words of his Diocesan, delivered on the day of his interment. "It was my privilege," says the venerable Prelate, "to be often the depository of the cares and anxieties, the longing desires and earnest endeavors, the watchful solitudes, the cheering hopes, the affectionate fears, and practical dependence on God's grace, with which he gave himself, instant in season and out of season to his pastoral charge. I have often said, and would now say, in con-

scious sincerity and integrity of heart, that in all the wide range of my observation, I never knew a pastor whose whole soul seemed more engaged in the great work to which he had been set apart. I have seen this in the happy results of his ministry, and felt it in the many occasions on which he has taken counsel with me in matters pertaining to his high and holy trust."

During the last two or three years of our departed friend's life, it was evident to his friends that his health was declining. I have been informed that a little while previous to his death, he had one or two attacks of the apoplexy; and that he was impressed with the idea that he would be called away in one of these attacks. The solemn messenger, it is true, did not come in this form, but his purpose was not executed with less despatch. He was aroused from his bed at the hour of 11 o'clock, Saturday night, 17th ult., by an alarm of fire. He looked

out at his window, and immediately complained of a difficulty in breathing; and at 3 o'clock Sunday morning, he leaned his head on his Saviour's bosom, and breathed his life out sweetly there. Peace to his mortal remains, until reanimated by the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God.

The task of friendship done to the memory of our deceased brother, I shall conclude in a few words to his dear relatives. And here, my duty is easy. I have only to point you, my dear friends, to the consoling ingredients with which your cup is mixed. You are taught by the holy apostle, St. Paul, not to be sorry as men without hope for those who sleep in Jesus. For the comfort of the bereaved and disconsolate, a voice from heaven proclaimed:—“*Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord: even so saith the Spirit: for they rest from their labors.*” I know it would have added to your consoling thoughts, if your hands had administered

to the last necessities of decaying nature ; if you had been permitted to stand around him and witness that calm serenity of his countenance that bespoke his inward peace. But the great Supreme, who doeth all things right, ordered it otherwise : and it is for us to quiet every feeling by the pious consideration—“ *It is the Lord.*” Ever cherish his memory by following his example of piety and devotedness to God. Take Christ as your portion, and though separated you must be for a while, you shall unite again in that glorious region where parting shall be no more forever. May we all be awakened by this visitation of Providence, to a deep sense of the vanity and uncertainty of human life ; and be graciously led to seek supremely those things which are above ; “ that so, among the sundry and manifold changes of the world, our hearts may surely there be fixed, where true joys are to be found, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Amen.









